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Hawaiian Recordings: The Early Years

By L.E. Andersen, With T. Malcolm Rockwell

Two lines from "My Girl's A Hawaiian Maiden," recorded by Arthur Collins for Berliner on February 17, 1900, reflect both the ignorance of many Americans and their curiosity about the Hawaiian Islands at the turn of the twentieth century:

Each night, down in the jungle we two would go;
Then on a hippopotamus make love, you know...

Mainland Americans had good reason to be curious about Hawaii, still called the Sandwich Islands by some, since it ranked with darkest Africa in terms of mystery. It was so distant that few had been there except sailors, whalers, missionaries, and those with business or political interests.

Curiosity, however, had been stirred with the publication of Mark Twain's Roughing It. In the second volume of that work, Twain describes his travels to Hawaii with sarcasm and some deprecation mixed with respect and humor.

Political unrest under King David Kalakaua in the 1870s and '80s excited further interest, as did the succession to the throne in 1891 of his sister Queen Lydia Liliuokalani. The queen herself was deposed two years later in a staged revolution influenced by missionaries' descendants and planters. The involvement of U.S. Marines generated still more coverage and interest.

Annexation of Hawaii to the U.S. in 1898 stimulated casual travel. Although full scale tourism would not occur until decades later, increased awareness of this fascinating far-off land--still tempered with ignorance--fostered fanciful song and verse such as the Arthur Collins song cited above, which I regard as a modified coon song. It also awakened a desire among Americans to sample genuine Hawaiian music. Hawaii-based T. Malcolm Rockwell, who collects early Hawaiian recordings, reports that a few Hawaiian entertainers began traveling to San Francisco on Matson Line steamships, such as the S.S. Lurline, to pursue mainland vaudeville engagements.

The recording industry at first paid little attention to authentic Hawaiian repertoire. An 1891 Edison recording session in Honolulu is said to have featured the Royal Hawaiian Band directed by Henry Berger, but Rockwell knows of no such cylinders existing today.

Rockwell reports Toots Paka and husband July are documented as having recorded for Edison in San Francisco as early as 1899, likely using the facilities of Peter Bacigalupi, who was National Phonograph Company's major West Coast jobber. Additional sessions featuring other Hawaiian artists included the Ellis brothers and Sonny Cunha. Rockwell says Edison cylinders with Hawaiian material were available in England in 1901. It is not known whether these originated with the San Francisco sessions, but English releases of that period are generally regarded as of U.S. origin.

Kenneth Lorenz, in Volume II of his Pioneer Discography Series, notes that around 1901 Columbia's "Hawaiian block" of cylinders contained two selections, "Aloha Oe" (30200) and "Kuu Pua i Paoakalani" (30201). Typically for Columbia, no artists' names are given. I know of no other domestic or foreign Hawaiian recordings before 1904 but I suspect some were made, if only in small quantity or by obscure manufacturers.

The first major offering of Hawaiian repertoire appears to have been made by the American Record Co. of Springfield, Massachusetts and New York City. These are on 10-5/8 inch blue single-sided "Indian label" discs. By 1904 several Hawaiian troupes were performing in various mainland cities including New York, where American's Hawaiian recordings apparently were made late in that year or early in 1905.

The English collector Frank Andrews reports that by March 1905 at least 29 discs had been issued by American. He says all were by a group known as the Royal Hawaiian Troubadours, billed as "an orchestra and double quartette of

Native Hawaiians." Numbers run from 030935 through 030950 and 030965 through at least 030977. However, the following have not been found: 030949, 030970, 030978, and 030979. The numbers 030951 through 030964 are not yet found but they may be non-Hawaiian repertoire.

I have eleven of the discs. Some feature these soloists: "Mr. Louie Thompson, Hawaiian Baritone"; "Mr. James Kita," a tenor; "Miss Annie Hila, famous Hawaiian contralto"; "Sam Kupanihi," a baritone; and an impressive basso whose name is sadly obscured by worn grooves. The labels credit only "Royal Hawaiian Troubadours," but the announcements mention soloists when present. Bill Bryant of Maine reported a further Thompson solo. All are fully announced, ending with "American Record." On my records the instrumentation appears to consist of two flutes, two or three ukuleles, one violin and one guitar.

Compared to the Hawaiian and increasingly pseudo-Hawaiian performances beginning with the craze of 1915, these discs sound delightfully "primitive," but they are actually far removed from the pure Hawaiian forms of a century earlier. Musical and melodic structure were drastically altered by foreign incursions from the beginning of the nineteenth century onward. By 1904 the influence of hymns, ballads, and sea chanteys was evident if not dominant.

Only the flute remained as a traditional instrument, and the recorded sound suggests to me that this simple flute playing, if not the instrument itself, is close to the traditional Hawaiian form. The other instruments had been introduced to Hawaiians by haoles (white people), such as the violin and guitar. Even the ukulele, now regarded as quintessentially Hawaiian, was introduced by Portuguese sailors less than forty years before these discs were made. The songs are sung beautifully in Hawaiian and there is the traditional rasp at the edge of the male singer's voice.

Frank Andrews reports that thanks to the connection (via the Prescott brothers) between American, Odeon, and American Odeon with its "Blue Odeon Duplex Records" issued in England, four American sides of the Troubadours were issued in England on two double-sided 27 cm. (10-5/8 inch) discs: 030944 coupled with 030975, and 030976 coupled with 030977. American also issued a few double-discs in the U.S. and offered pairings-to-order, provided one ordered in quantity.

American also supplied matrices to Busy Bee and possibly Odeon. I know of one apparently Odeon-derived Busy Bee, a Halfdan Rode (bass) solo recorded in Kristiania (now Oslo), Norway. One can only imagine the incarnations in which the Troubadours might be found though they were probably all limited to the oversize format. Frank Andrews does not believe any were issued in the 10 inch size which appeared in November of 1905.

The only clue to the Royal Hawaiian Troubadours' identity lies in the use of that name in 1919 by Ernest Kaai's group in a performance of Hawaiian music, possibly the first in modern times, in Batavia (now Jakarta), Indonesia. Ernest Kaleihoku Kaai, one of the earliest promoters of Hawaiian music, was involved with various ensembles as early as 1900 and, according to Larry Tunstall of Oakland, California, formed in 1904 the first "modern" dance band in Honolulu. At one time Kaai had a dozen "bands" in Honolulu, including engagements in hotels, on Matson liners, and at private parties. Tunstall's source for this information is Hawaiian Music and Musicians: An Illustrated History, edited by George S. Kanahele.

Victor seems to be the second firm to have recorded an extensive Hawaiian repertoire. By 1905 the company had absorbed Zonophone and was using its recording technicians for overseas as well as domestic work. In that year Victor appears to have sent such a Zonophone team to record in China. The trip produced Victor-labeled issues with Zonophone matrix numbers in the shellac.

Either en route to China or on the way home, the team stopped at Hawaii. The resulting 54 10" sides then appeared in Victor catalogs under a special "foreign" 15000 number series, starting in 1906. The 15000 series remained in the catalogue until 1915, but though the Hawaiian selections bore Zonophone matrix numbers, William Moran reports they were issued only with black Victor labels with numbers running 15000 through 15053. Their Zonophone matrix numbers, by extrapolation from known specimens, appear to begin at about 1136 and extend sequentially upward. Comparison with Chinese numbers might determine which were made first.

Thus, Victor made the first large-scale Hawaiian location recording effort. All or most of the matrices likely were taken at Honolulu, but those by the "Quartette of Hawaiian Girls" from Kawaiaha'o Seminary may have been done on a side trip to Kauai. Other vocalists included soprano Mrs. Nani Alapai, Wm. S. Ellis, John Ellis, Ellis Bros. Quartette, Ellis Bros. Glee Club, and H. Keaweamahi.

L.E. Andersen studies early Hawaiian recordings. Hawaiian "crazes" came later. The 49th State Hawaii Record Co. issued Hawaiian music only.

Instrumentation, sometimes grouped as "orchestra," included two flutes, guitar, one or two ukuleles, and possibly violin. The four songs I have are sung in Hawaiian and the accompaniment is not commercialized. These recordings have a delightfully primitive sound even though in the literal sense they are not primitive. A friend commented about one, "That's sailor music!" (it probably derived from sailor music). The young seminary girls' voices, a capella, are so ethereally beautiful that they bring tears to my eyes.

Edison's first Hawaiian releases, all recorded in New York, were announced in the December 1909 Edison Phonograph Monthly as a special "foreign" numbered series of five two-minute and five four-minute cylinders, all by Toots Paka's Hawaiians. The group included July Paka (ukulele); Toots, whose rather Americanized "hula dance" and costume were already famous on vaudeville circuits; and guitarists John Paaluhi and Joseph Kekuku. Dick Spottswood believes the latter's use of the slide guitar is the first recorded. All four sang. Amberol numbers were 115000 through 11504, and Standard numbers were 20712 through 20716. All are rare today.

This "early" period of Hawaiian recording may be said to have ended with Columbia finally making Hawaiian recordings. Rockwell reports that in about 1910 a Columbia team traveled to Honolulu and at least 39 matrices numbered from 21251 to 21332 were secured. Additional matrices from approximately 46410 to 46425 and 46395 through 46398 may have come from these sessions or later ones. Because specimens are as yet undiscovered, we cannot be certain about beginning and ending numbers nor about continuity.

Like Victor and Edison, the Columbia Phonograph Co., General, regarded Hawaii as "foreign" despite it having been a U.S. territory since 1898. Columbia assigned the recordings to

a special "Y" series of double-sided discs. These were released possibly as early as 1912, bearing the dark blue "foreign" labels normally associated with Columbia's early Hispanic issues, such as the well-known "C" series. Many show patent statements in Spanish. Numbers run from Y-1 to at least Y-48. It is not known whether higher numbers were issued.

Hawaiian artists included Miss Keala Kaai, Ernest Kaai, Kaai Glee Club, Lemon Glee Club, Crowel Glee Club, Thomas Charter, Robert Kaawa, Henry Keau, Harry Clark, Mr. Palikapu, Dan Makaena, Mr. Rullet, Mr. Kaiwi, Henry N. Clark (a.k.a. Harry Clark?), Mme. Nani Alapai (of Victor fame), and one R.K. Holstein.

Curiously, the last known disc in the Y series, Y-48, is of matrices 77534 and 77535, respectively "Honolulu, My Home," by the Broadway Quartette, and "My Ukulele Girl," by Albert Campbell and Henry Burr! Both were recorded in New York City. It is possible that a Y-49 and Y-50 of similar genre were included to round out the series to an even 50, but I know of no such recordings. Other yet-undiscovered numbers with unknown matrix numbers are Y-4, 5, 6, 9, 14, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25, 27, 31, 35, 36, 38, 40, 41, 42, and 45.

This appears to mark the end of the early period in Hawaiian recording. In just a few years the so-called "Hawaiian craze" would begin. By 1916 many of the best-selling tunes were promoted as "Hawaiian" though they were not Hawaiian at all. Once again, the music had evolved, and an era had ended, which makes the early recordings all the more important. They represent a musical form now altered beyond recognition or lost altogether.

OFFICE OF
MAX HART
902 PALACE THEATRE BUILDING
1564 BROADWAY
TELEPHONE 7403 BRYANT

CABLE ADDRESS: MARTAX, N. Y.

NEW YORK Oct. 25, 11916.

Mr. Will Rossiter
Music Publisher
Chicago, Ill.

Dear Sir:

Will you kindly give me some information regarding a "Jas Band" which you have.

Harry O. Brunn's *The Story of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band* (Louisiana State University Press, 1960) reports that upon hearing the Original Dixieland Jass Band while in Chicago, Al Jolson had enthusiastically recommended the band to agent Max Hart, who signed the band for Reisenweber's. Unfortunately, Brunn gives no source for Jolson's involvement (Jolson was traveling in late 1916 and early 1917 in *Robinson Crusoe, Jr.*--that show was not given in Chicago). Whether at Jolson's prodding or not, Hart had made inquires about a "Jas Band" as early as the autumn of 1916. The original telegram is now owned by Gary Edwards, grandson of ODJB trombonist Eddie Edwards.

JURASSIC PARK JAZZ

BY BRIAN RUST

Dinosaurs seem to be the "in" things now, and I can understand why, especially among children. When I was eight, a series of photographic cards was issued with Army Club cigarettes, and with the selfless help of the smokers in my family, I managed to complete two sets, one large, one small. After the thrill of completing a realistic-looking photograph of *Iguanodon Bernissartensis* or *Triceratops Prorsus* had faded, my affections turned towards old dance records given me by kindly neighbors and family friends, among which were some very old items indeed (well, they were at least twelve or thirteen years old then).

They fascinated me, and out of these relics has grown my lifelong appreciation of real jazz. The sound of small bands that played jazz--or thought they played it while the Original Dixieland Jazz Band was appearing in London, leaving a hiatus in America that many were rushing to fill--still fascinates me.

Some early sounds are too Jurassic even for my taste. I'm thinking especially of the four sides on Edison Bell Winner made by Murray Pilcer's Jazz Band early in 1919, before anyone in England could have heard real jazz. But much of it stands comparison with what has been accepted as small-band jazz.

Of bands that recorded and were issued in America in 1919 and 1920, the one most closely approaching the superb cohesion and attack of the ODJB was the New Orleans Jazz Band, which made two sides for Okeh and two for Gennett in the weeks following the Armistice of 1918 (even then, one was repeated--"Ja Da"--but I know of no other version of this standard that matches what Jimmy Durante's great quintet did with it). The recording quality in each case is not as good as Victor's or Columbia's, but the feeling for jazz comes through from the word go and never lets up.

"Why Cry Blues," recorded by substantially the same band for Gennett about eighteen months later under the name Jimmy Durante's Jazz Band, somehow is lackluster. What else was made that day, I wonder? The reverse, "Old Man Jazz" by Saxi Holtsworth's Harmony Hounds, is as painful as the Murray Pilcers, the whole side being dominated by a laughing trombone and Holtsworth himself doing a feeble impression of Ted Lewis. It was issued in England, of course.

The ODJB's successors may be regarded as the Louisiana Five, who recorded quite a number of sides in 1919 for Columbia, Edison and Emerson. Only on one is a cornet present, and what a difference it makes! Alcide Nunez, the clarinettist, had preceded Larry Shields in the ODJB, but while he was fluent and had a lovely tone, he had very restricted ideas and seems content following the score as written while trombonist Charlie Panelli provides a simple counterpoint. This would be much more effective if Nunez had a cornetist to play to. On "Slow and Easy" he gets one, and cornet transforms the band into something of real jazz value.

Only a couple of months later, Nunez was present on some dates with the Happy Six, a recording band directed by drummer/xylophonist/bell-soloist Harry A. Yerkes, along with his ex-boss and fellow New Orleans trombonist Tom Brown. The Happy Six did not have a static personnel. From time to time their personnel included such saxophonists as Rudy Wiedoeft and Bert Ralton. Their trumpets could be Earl Oliver or Clarence Grancy, the latter playing some vigorous trumpet on the Six's record "Dance-O-Mania." From his own account, Tom Brown is present on most, if not all the Yerkes records made between 1919 and 1923. Yerkes, by the early '20s a power in the land of Columbia, was present on his Columbia dates as an active conductor, but he managed many groups that recorded for other

labels, some using his name.

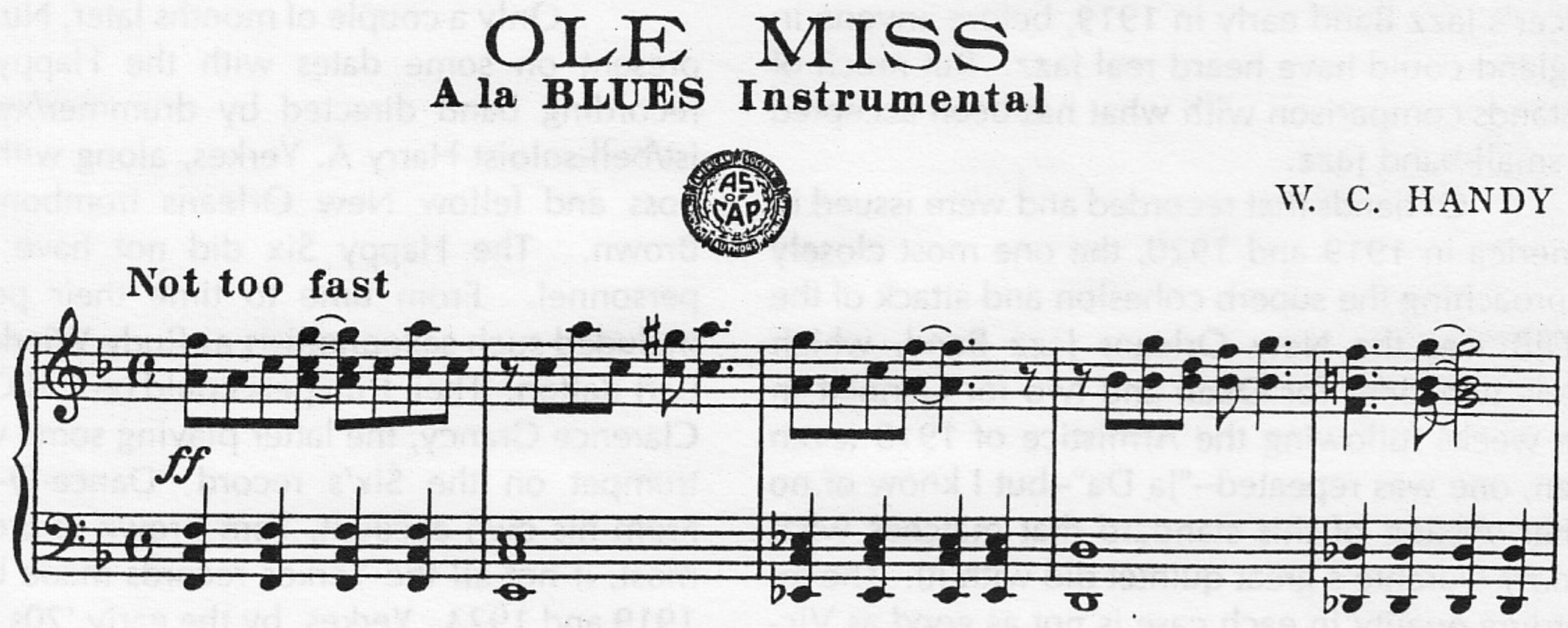
A Yerkes band of obvious importance appears on Columbia as Gorman's Novelty Syncopators. Ross Gorman, a multi-instrumentalist who later joined Paul Whiteman, plays clarinet on "Barking Dog," the only title issued, but the brass section of Clarence Grancy on cornet and Keith Pitman on trombone shows a complete understanding of small-band jazz playing that was rare in those days.

Eddie Grossbart was the drummer for Gorman's Novelty Syncopators. Four months later he was in London with the All American Five. (He never returned to New York in a professional capacity.) By the end of 1920, Grancy and Pitman were in London also, as members of Art Hickman's New York London Five, playing in the Italian Roof Garden above the Criterion Theatre and recording mellow jazz-orientated dance music for HMV.

Having lost Grossbart, the Gorman band recorded two titles for Paramount in the early summer of 1920 with no drummer. They were labelled The White Way Jazz Band and their "Tiger Rag" is the only recorded version I know from which the familiar "tiger roars" are omitted. Nevertheless, the complete comprehension of what constituted a good jazz performance, noticed on the Columbia recording of "Barking Dog," is apparent on these two Paramount sides (the other is "Blues My Naughty Sweetie Gives to Me").

Before crossing the Atlantic eastwards, I should mention the Synco Jazz Band, whose one issued side on Columbia ("Breeze") also shows a sense of integration and a certain mellowness (which may be due to the recording technique). Their contemporary records for Pathé and slightly later sides for Okeh as the Tampa Blue Jazz Band have a tendency for shrillness, especially on the part of the gaspipe-clarinettist Joe Samuels, who dominates everything.

When the ODJB left England in July 1920, the band left a vacancy that only the Durante or the Gorman group could have filled successfully, but American pianist Billy Arnold and a quintet of musicians playing more or less the same instruments tried their best to follow. They made four sides for HMV, all rejected, and two for Columbia, which, though issued, hardly suggest that here was a band able to carry on the good work of the ODJB. A ragged ensemble, edgy unrelaxed phrasing (especially by the trumpet), and a rather curious sense of pitch are much at variance with all that the Dixielanders stood for. Not surprisingly, their time in London was brief.



In late 1918 the New Orleans Jazz Band recorded a lively version of Handy's "Ole Miss," issued on vertical-cut Okeh. On Gennett labels, the band is called the Original New Orleans Jazz Band.

This was recorded on April 14, 1919--clarinet, piano, banjo, drums, trombone. The band added cornet for Columbia A-2949. What a difference!

At least Columbia showed us how the Arnold band sounded. HMV recorded other bands in that same year 1920 without issuing even one title. How, we wonder, did the Ragpickers sound on the four titles they made over two sessions that spring? Were the Red Devils who made four HMV sides on September 1, 1920 as interesting on record as they appear to have been on the stand, whether Sidney Bechet was with them or not? (He wouldn't have been present on the records, would he? Would he?)

Despite earlier rumors and flat statements, Bechet was not with the Southern Rag-a-Jazz Band on Edison Bell Winner in 1921. Although these were American visitors, their efforts are rather dreadful, being dominated by a soprano sax suggesting Ted Lewis at his worst.

One solitary side credited to the Wild West Jazz Band graced the Zonophone catalogs from the spring of 1920, but let no-one suppose this to be anything like what its label may suggest. The title is "Dardanella," and without hearing it, Sandy Forbes and I rather rashly supposed it to be a crude attempt to cash in on the popularity of jazz (meaning dance music not of obviously pre-1914 origin) by concealing the regular Zonophone house unit, the Black Diamonds Band. To be fair, that is partly true--except that clearly audible are a banjo and a tenor saxophone, neither of which is a regular part of the Black Diamonds. Bill Triggs suggested that the banjoist was Emil Grimshaw, which in turn suggested to me that the tenor player was Dick Langham, of the Savoy Dance Orchestra that made two sides issued on Columbia about that time, and was also with the West End Dance Quartet that made three HMVs (rejected, of course) the following September. Incidentally, I wonder who constituted Sherbo's American band that made three HMVs (rejected, of course) three weeks later?

The Zonophone lists of 1919 show four titles issued as by the Manhattan Jazz Band, but there is no jazz among them. They may have been made by members of the house band, who created as much mayhem as they could in the commonly-held belief that such indicated the quintessence of jazz. It is of little consequence now, some 75 years later.

To be fair to HMV, praise must be given for two titles by Jack Hylton and the "Queen's" Dance Orchestra, issued on B 1236 ("Turque") and B 1299 ("The Bull-Frog Patrol"). On both titles, Edmund Jenkins plays beautiful Dixieland clarinet. The band sounds relaxed and as if it was enjoying what it was doing. "Turque," by the way, was composed by Paul Wyer and Pierre de Caillaux, both late of the Southern Syncopated Orchestra.

Then came the dawn, with King Oliver, the New Orleans Rhythm Kings, Jelly-Roll Morton, the Wolverines, Jimmy Blythe, Clarence Williams--and all the myriads we have loved for decades. Yet out of the prehistoric age have come the records I have mentioned, all worthwhile additions to any collection (with exceptions noted, of course) and by some standards not impossibly expensive.

An early version of this appeared in the British journal Hillandale News (April 1994). Thanks to its editor, Chris Hamilton, for permission to reprint it.

The First Song to Refer to Jazz

By Frank Powers

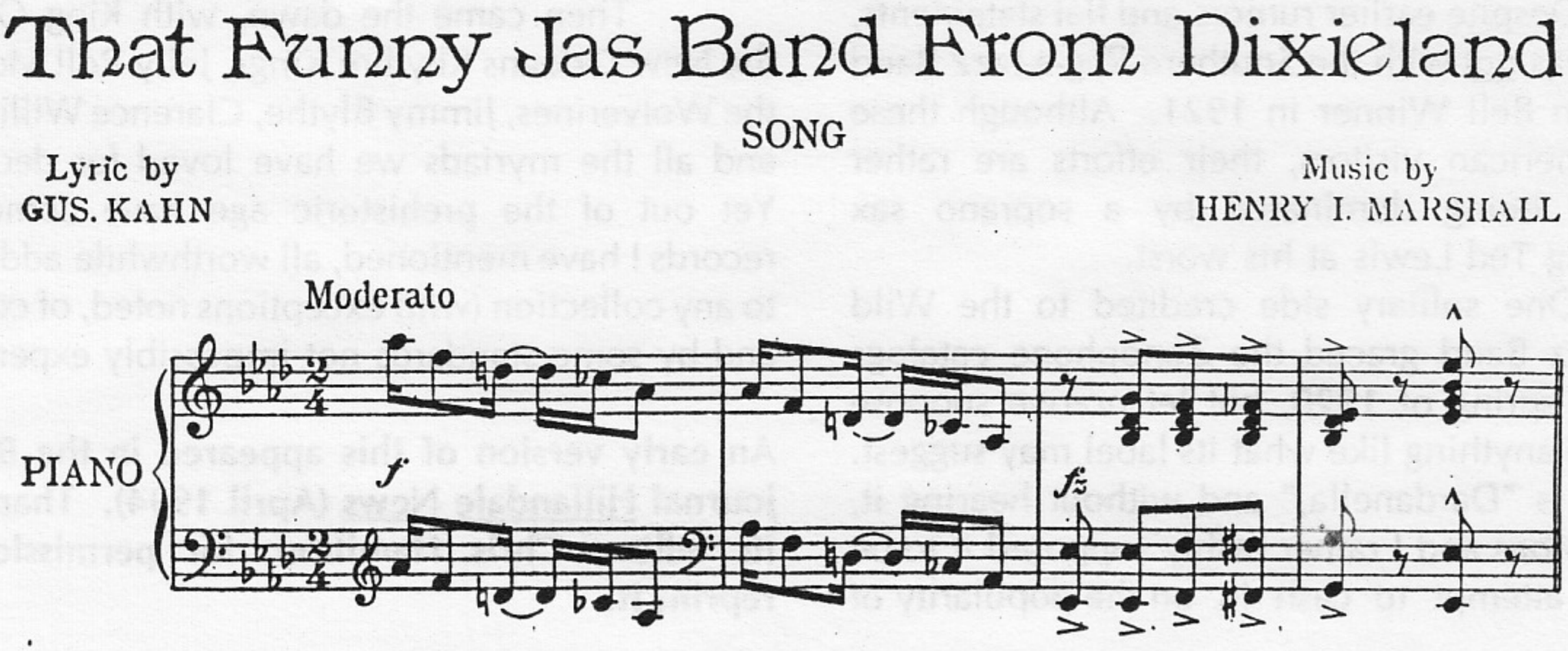
In 1916 Jerome H. Remick and Company published the song "That Funny Jas Band From Dixieland," with lyrics by Gus Kahn and music by Henry I. Marshall. The song is important because it is, as far as anyone can determine, the earliest published song to mention the new music called "jas." Edison ledgers show Collins and Harlan recorded the song for Edison in early December, 1916 (Diamond Disc #50423; Blue Amberol dubbing #3140). The singing duo recorded the song for Victor on January 12, 1917 (#18235).

I am convinced that the song was inspired by the music of the Original Dixieland Jazz (or Jass or Jas or Jasz--these spellings were used interchangeably) Band. But the ODJB did not play at Reisenweber's in New York City nor make recordings until early 1917, so how did Kahn and Marshall come to write a song about a jazz band in 1916? I believe Kahn and Marshall were plying their trade in Chicago in 1916 when the ODJB was in residence at the Casino Gardens at Kinzie and North Clark streets just outside the Loop.

If composer Henry I. Marshall is remembered these days, it may be for the 1911 song "Be My Baby Bumble Bee," which Marshall co-wrote with lyricist Stanley Murphy. American Quartet fans may appreciate Marshall's "On the 5:15."

Lyricist Gus Kahn was a major American songwriter. He was even the subject of a 1952 Hollywood bio-pic titled I'll See You In My Dreams, starring Danny Thomas as Gus Kahn and Doris Day as his long suffering who-so-ever. Born in Germany in 1886, Kahn immigrated with his parents to the United States in 1891, settling in Chicago. He would have been about 30 when the song "That Funny Jas Band From Dixieland" was published. By 1916 he had been a professional song writer for a decade or so. The year before he had a major hit with the waltz standard "Memories."

A hit for Kahn in 1916 was the marvelous ragtime song "Pretty Baby," written in collaboration with Tony Jackson, a black New Orleans pianist and singer whose career had started in the brothels of Storyville. Jelly Roll Morton called Jackson "the greatest single-handed entertainer in the world." Jackson left New Orleans in 1904 on a theatrical tour but jumped ship in Louisville and stayed there some time before migrating to Chicago. Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis state in They All Played Ragtime that Jackson remained in the Windy City until his death in 1921. Tony Jackson's documented residency in Chicago supports my contention that Gus Kahn did not move to New



York City until the early 1920s or so. Music composer Egbert Van Alstyne, also a Chicagoan and frequent collaborator with Kahn, had his name on "Pretty Baby," probably for publication access.

The band that evolved into the Original Dixieland Jazz Band arrived in Chicago in March of 1916 under the leadership of drummer Johnny Stein and under the personal management of entrepreneur Harry James (not the trumpeter). The band opened at Schiller's Cafe on the South Side. Interestingly, the Marshall and Kahn song speaks of going to "some cafe that's full of pep and ginger" to hear "jas." The band was not the first New Orleans band to play in Chicago. It had been preceded a year earlier by Tom Brown's Band from Dixieland which accompanied comedian Joe Frisco in vaudeville. There were perhaps other "jas" bands, both black and white.

Just when and where and under what circumstances the word "jazz" and its various mutations was invented has always been a matter of conjecture and arguments. I will not summarize here what has been said about its origins, but I believe Johnny Stein's new band in Chicago was the first to be labeled with the name. H.O. Brunn in The Story of The Original Dixieland Jazz Band (Louisiana State University Press, 1960), a flawed yet invaluable reference work, quotes an item in the May 1, 1916, Chicago Herald: "The shriek of the women's drunken laughter rivaled the blatant scream of the imported New Orleans Jass Band, which never seemed to stop playing" (37).

William Howland Kenney in his carefully researched Chicago Jazz, A Cultural History 1904-1930 (Oxford University Press, 1993) reports the first use of "Jass Band" in the Chicago black press was in the September 30, 1916, Chicago Defender. Kenney writes that the word is used "to describe music produced by black pianist-songwriter W. Benton Overstreet in support of vaudevillian Estella Harris at the Grand Theater. Harris . . . was now accompanied by a 'Jass Band'" (11). Kenney also states, "Very soon thereafter, a variant spelling of the term--'Jaz'--was used in the Indianapolis Freeman to describe an instrumental group, John W. Wickliffe's Ginger Orchestra" (11). Early "jass" was often associated with the word "ginger." The Marshall and Kahn song claims a cafe with "jas" music is "full of pep and ginger."

When the owners of Schiller's Cafe refused to grant a pay increase, four members of Johnny Stein's band deserted. Stein himself would not violate the contract. The others of the Dixie Jass Band, as it was now called, moved to Del'Abe's Cafe in the Hotel Normandy at Clark and Randolph streets. Tony Sbarbaro was brought up from New Orleans to replace Stein. Eventually Harry James booked the band into the Casino Gardens.

Also, for both personal and musical reasons, clarinetist Alcide "Yellow" Nunez was fired and replaced by New Orleanian Larry Shields, who with cornetist Nick LaRocca, trombonist Eddie Edwards, pianist Henry Ragas and drummer Sbarbaro would constitute the classic personnel of the Original Dixieland Jass Band. This is the ensemble that would make the historic Victor recordings the following year.

I believe at the Casino in Chicago the Original Dixieland Jazz Band attracted the attention of songwriters Gus Kahn and Henry I. Marshall.

FRANK POWERS LIVES IN CINCINNATI, OHIO.

Victor recorded this on January 12, 1917. Edison's version, recorded December 1, 1916, has a jazz break that is a little wilder than Victor's.

Further Notes on "Jass" -- *By Tim Gracyk*

Soon after I wrote about Collins and Harlan's "That Funny Jas Band from Dixieland" for V78J's second issue, Frank Powers sent to me a copy of the sheet music. His accompanying letter was so interesting that I invited him to expand upon his observations for V78J readers, and I am pleased to print his comments in this issue.

We now know when Collins and Harlan first recorded "That Funny Jas Band from Dixieland," which I feel is important since this is the earliest song known to refer to the new music. Brian Rust reports that Edison ledgers show Collins and Harlan recording the song for Edison on December 1, 1916 (Diamond Disc #50423; Blue Amberol dubbing #3140). The singing duo recorded the song for Victor on January 12, 1917 (#18235--issued in April, Rust reports).

Collins and Harlan recorded for Edison a Hawaiian number with matrix #5180 on November 28, 1916, days before recording "That Funny Jas Band," with matrix 5186. A Hawaiian song is far more typical of this time. Collins and Harlan often recorded what was popular at the moment, cashing in on trends, so it is interesting that the duo recorded a "jass" satire months before the first "jass" record would appear! The duo was ahead of the trend.

I listen to Tin Pan Alley songs from the WWI period that refer to jazz. Curiously, songs like Berlin's "Mr. Jazz Himself" and Jerome's "Jazz Baby" imply saxophone was an essential jazz instrument. Gene Greene sings that the trombone "harmonizes with the saxophone" in "Alexander's Got A Jazz Band Now," recorded on November 9, 1917 (Columbia A-2472). Yet jazz bands making records in these years rarely used sax. The ODJB did not use a sax until 1920, when Bennie Krueger joined sessions at the insistence of Victor executive James McDonald. The Louisiana Five did not use sax, nor the New Orleans Jazz Band. When song-writers associated the sax with jazz, what jazz bands were they thinking of? Cafe bands? Rudy Wiedoeft with the Frisco Jazz Band? The Browns?

The Brown Brothers Saxophone Sextette was evidently regarded as a "jass" unit when it was in Chin Chin in 1916. The Diamond Disc jacket for "That Funny Jas Band" states, "What do you know about a 'Jas Band?' They had a little one in the operetta 'Chin Chin;' did you see it? Also, there is one playing at one of New York's big restaurants." I think this alludes to the Browns and the ODJB.

I am interested in everything written by record companies to promote or describe jazz during these years. On March 15, 1917, Arthur Fields recorded "Everybody Loves a 'Jass' Band," and when it was issued in July 1917 on Diamond Disc 50439, its disc jacket stated, "Do you love a 'Jass' band? Doubtless you would if you knew what one was. You'll know all about it when you have heard this song. 'Jass' bands are all the rage this year in the 'Lobster Palaces' along Broadway."

The Edison company deserves credit for issuing early "jass, with the Frisco Jazz Band recording "Johnson 'Jass' Blues" on May 10, 1917 (issued on Diamond Disc 50470 but first in August on Blue Amberol dubbing 3254). The Frisco Jazz Band may be the second band to record jazz, the ODJB being first. Certainly Joe Frisco's band was among the first, as was Earl Fuller's Famous Jazz Band, which recorded for Victor "Slippery Hank" and "Yah-De-Dah" on June 4, 1917.

But the second band issued as a "jass" band by a record company may be Borbee's "Jass" Orchestra, which recorded "It's A Long, Long Time" and "Just The Kind Of A Girl" on February 14, 1917 (Columbia A-2233). The band was led by pianist Ernest Borbee, whose band later recorded two titles for Columbia on August 17, 1917. The music is close to W.C. Handy's Columbia work--it is not exactly jazz. Brian Rust's Jazz Records 1897-1942 reports Borbee recorded two titles as member of the Original Georgia Five in 1923. Is anything else known of the obscure Borbee?

Rust's American Dance Band Discography gives the name Borbee's Tango Orchestra since the Columbia files show that name for this first session, but David Rocco and Rust tell me the Columbia label gives the name as Borbee's "Jass" Orchestra. The band was evidently renamed a "jass" orchestra at the time of release. I suspect this was to cash in on the ODJB's success. For those studying "jass," Borbee should be an intriguing figure.

Guitar on 78s and Cylinders

A Survey of Pioneering Efforts

By Dick Spottswood

The modern acoustic guitar is a descendant of the Arabic *ut*, or *oud*, which became the lute (i.e. *l'ut*) as variations of it spread through late medieval and Renaissance Europe. Today's classical guitar was developed in sixteenth century Spain as a more easily mastered alternative to the lute. Around the same time, the guitar came to the New World with Spanish colonizers. It has accompanied Central and South American cancioneros ever since, while leaving its mark on the music of African-American and indigenous populations as well. Its use grew in this country during the nineteenth century, after the six-string design became more or less universal.

When live guitar music was confined to drawing rooms, parlors and small recital halls, its delicate sound and limited volume worked fine. Mandolins were a bit louder and the exuberant sound of a banjo could easily fill a theater or minstrel hall. Banjos were favored in the first recording studios of the 1890s and 1900s, since the wooden horns used for record-making could easily capture their aggressive sound.

Identifying early guitarists on record remains problematic, at least until discographers can identify all early records. An 1897 Berliner disc record catalog includes a photo of the (Swiss) Graus Mountain Choir, with guitar and zither players shown alongside the singers. A prominent early recording banjoist, Vess (for Sylvester) L. Ossman, whose studio career lasted from 1893 to 1917, fronted his Ossman-Dudley Trio on records on several occasions in 1906-7. The Trio consisted of Ossman, mandolinist Audley Dudley and a harp-guitarist who may have been either Roy Butin or George F. Dudley.

Early Recordings From The Old World

Earlier records from 1900 onwards, made by traveling teams of engineers for European labels, were designed primarily for local consumption in Cairo, Istanbul, Beirut and other mid-eastern locales. These included *ut* players in ensembles and occasionally as soloists. Early recordings were also made in Barcelona and Madrid, where guitars were integral to flamenco and other regional music styles, and in Lisbon, where the *guitarra* and *viola* were part of the *fado* tradition.

Much remains to be discovered about early recording guitarists in Europe. Andrés Segovia made no recordings until around 1927. An obscure Italian classical guitarist, Pasquale Taraffo, recorded for Odeon in Milan around 1921 and again for Columbia in New York in 1929. Spanish-born Guillermo Gómez (b. 1880) moved to Mexico in 1900, where he taught and performed for years. His 1928 Columbia records were made in New York and had been preceded by a 1926 Columbia

series made by his pupil Francisco Salinas. Recording flamenco guitarists in Spain included Niño Ricardo (Manuel Serrapi, 1909-1972), Miguel Burrill, Ramón Montoya and Manolo de la Huelva. In Portugal, fado instrumental stars included Armandinho (Salgado Armando Freire, 1891-1946), Ricardo Borges de Sousa and Joao de Matos.

Guitar Recordings Made in Mexico and Cuba

The first American-made recordings with guitars were done in Mexico City in 1904, when the Edison company made 303 two-minute cylinder recordings of local musicians in a temporary studio erected at 7, Calle de Colón. Most were by zarzuela celebrities and military bands, though Rafael Herrera Robinsón made a number of songs with guitar, including several important early corridos. Some cancionero duets by Robinsón y Picazo and Abrego y Picazo were made with guitar accompaniment; Felipe Llera, Sra. Modesta Zamudio and José María Palma made further voice and guitar records. The Trío Arriaga, with two mandolins and a guitarist named Sr. Obscura, contributed several instrumental titles.

Edison's 1904 cylinders proved to be a perishable sound preservation medium, and few examples survive. But the trip was successful enough to encourage similar expeditions by Victor and Columbia. Columbia's early recording ledgers were destroyed years ago, which makes accurate dating and assessment of its activities a challenge, but Columbia followed quickly on Edison's heels, recording duets by Rosales y Robinsón and Abrego y Picazo before the end of 1904. Victor came to Mexico City last of all in July 1905, to record the Trío Arriaga and Abrego y Picazo yet again.

Victor also journeyed to Buenos Aires in 1905, making voice and guitar discs for its Zonofono label of *payadores* Arturo de Navas, Higinio Cazón and the celebrated black tango pioneer Gabino Ezeiza (1858-1916), who also recorded for Columbia around this time.

The Cuban portion of a *Catalogo de Discos Zon-o-fono, Mayo, 1906*, shows 200+ items made in Havana in 1905. Accompaniments are not listed, but *trovadores* Adolfo Columbo and Agustín Díaz possibly had guitar accompaniments.

During the winter of 1905-6, Edison was the first to record in Havana. Over 300 master cylinders were made in a so-called "temporary laboratory" at 146 Industria; the 205 chosen for release included some interesting material indeed: the Trío Ramos included guitar, *laúd* (a mandola-shaped 12-stringed instrument) and *bandurría* (mandolin-shaped, also with 12 strings).

Black *guajiro* singers Antonio Morejón and Martín Silveira recorded a number of topical *puntos*, each accompanying himself on bandurría. Flamenco singer Telesforo del Campo performed with a guitarist, as did *trovadores* Floro y Miguel, with guitarist Alberto Villalón. Of special interest are two solos by guitarist Sebastian Hidalgo, who recorded a polka, "Selva Negra" and the popular "Miserere" from Verdi's *Il Trovatore* (Jelly Roll Morton recalled that this was also performed widely in New Orleans at the turn of the century).

Hidalgo's two Edison cylinders (18941 and 19062) are unknown today, but they are most likely the earliest recorded guitar solos. Although Edison's 1906 Cuba list was a major achievement, the company did no further recording there, perhaps because its cylinder format lacked sufficient market appeal.

Bandurría soloist José Ramirez made ten records for Victor in New York on July 19, 1906. His repertoire varied from arrangements of Verdi and Mascagni arias to Cuban and Mexican favorites, and included "Carnival of Venice," a favorite bravado instrumental piece of the time. Ramirez made further records for the obscure Imperial label in 1906 and cylinders for Edison (1909) and U.S. Everlasting (ca. 1911).

Edison returned to Mexico City in the spring of 1907 and made 375 cylinders in a new studio at 117, Avenida Oriente. Rosales y Robinsón, Abrego y Picazo and the Trío Arriaga were all were back for encores; a newcomer was solo guitarist Octaviano Yañes, described by a company publicist as "the acknowledged champion guitarist of Mexico, and it is doubtful if his equal can be found in the entire world." Hyperbole aside, Yañes was indeed a mature, accomplished musician, even by today's standards.

Tim Gracyk reports in "The First Solo Guitar Recording?" in Victrola And 78 Journal (Issue 3) that Yañes played a seven-stringed instrument, tuned B E A D G B E.

Another exceptional find was the Cuarteto Coculense, a pioneering mariachi group from Cocula, Guerrero, in southern Mexico, which featured duet singing with two violins, *vihuela* and *guitarrón*. Their sound was rough, ready and authentic, and it might not be stretching things to call them the earliest folk ensemble on records. Yañes and the Cuarteto subsequently recorded in disc form for Victor and Columbia in 1908-9. This promising start at recording Mexican folk music came to an abrupt halt after 1910, when the onset of the Revolution precluded further record making south of the border until the 1920s.

Edison recorded more Spanish guitar music in 1909, along with a singer called Lola La Flamenca, who probably performed with the Trio Instrumental Flamenco. Edison files show each in the New York studio on February 10 and 16, 1909. One of the musicians was possibly Amalio Cuenca, who subsequently recorded four flamenco guitar solos on March 3, 1909.

Two important early non-soloing guitarists came from Cuba and made records there and in

Mexico's Octaviano Yañes was among the earliest musicians to make solo guitar recordings.

New York. Alberto Villalón (1882-1955) accompanied many singers from 1906 through the 1920s. He was a member of the original Sexteto Nacional in the 1920s, and a prolific composer in the bargain. María Teresa Vera (1895-1965) was a prominent singer and guitarist who made many records with her partner Rafael Zequeira before his death in 1924. She formed the historic Sexteto Occidente in 1926.

The Guitar in North America

At the beginning of the 19th century, the six-string guitar was the standard in North America and most of Europe. A hundred years later, new steel-stringed models were making a greater volume of sound possible. Mail-order catalogs began to offer inexpensive factory-produced instruments and instruction books for sale, and guitars gradually found their way into rural cabins, square dance bands, Southern jook joints, and occasionally sanctified and holiness church services.

As the blues gathered momentum after 1900, the fiddles and banjos of nineteenth century minstrelsy were replaced by guitars and pianos in the creation of new African-American popular music. Though guitars appear in occasional early jazz group photos, dance band rhythms through the 1920s were normally provided by banjos and tubas. By the early 1930s, arch-top guitars had replaced banjos as the rhythm instrument of choice in dance bands across the country, with the sole exception of western jazz outfits, where banjos remained--alongside take-off, rhythm and steel guitars--for many years.

The relatively quiet sound of the guitar limited the settings in which it could be used. Its lower strings were loudest, so string ensembles put it on the bottom, where it could provide bass runs and rhythm for other instruments. Larger groups also occasionally featured a cello or bass, either plucked or bowed, for heavier rhythmic emphasis. Other solutions lay in the construction of larger, sturdier instruments with more bass resonance, in the substitution of steel strings for gut and, in the 1920s, placing metal resonators beneath the strings

in resophonic (i.e. Dobro) guitars to amplify the sound. The C.F. Martin Dreadnought models introduced in 1931 emphasized heavy bass resonance. Within a few years, they became the standard for acoustic guitars in non-orchestral settings.

Earlier musicians had tried to create louder guitars by other means. The African-American one-string was a simple homemade instrument with old world roots, constructed by children from available materials and played by sliding a bone, jacknife, or bottle neck over a taut string while plucking it. Some one-stringers graduated to slide guitar and discovered that the technique made the otherwise conventional instrument louder and more imposing--and it made flawed instruments with warped or bowed necks easier to play.

An oft-recounted early blues sighting occurred in Tutwiler, Mississippi in 1903, when W.C. Handy encountered an itinerant singer who played on his guitar with a pocket knife. The slide guitar has remained central to the blues ever since, though no recordings of blues sliders were made until twenty years later, when Louisville, Kentucky's Sylvester Weaver recorded two solos, "Guitar Rag" and "Guitar Blues," in New York for OKeh on November 2, 1923. The occasion also marked the first appearance of country blues of

Teddy Bunn was among the best of the pre-Charlie Christian jazz guitarists.

any kind on record. "Guitar Rag" was an influential performance. West Virginia's Jess Johnston and Roy Harvey recorded a version for Gennett seven years later and, as "Steel Guitar Rag," Weaver's piece gave national prominence to Bob Wills' Texas Playboys and Wills' electric steel player Leon McAuliffe, when they recorded it in 1936.

Guitar in Recordings of Hawaiian Music

More prevalent were the steel guitars featured with Hawaiian entertainment troupes touring the country before World War I. "Slide Routes," by Jas Obrecht, in the August 1994 issue of Guitar Player (89-94), discusses the instrument's reputed inventor, Joseph Kekuku, and the presence of the Hawaiian guitar before 1900. Curiously, the first recording expeditions to Hawaii by Victor (1905) and Columbia (ca. 1910) include no known examples of slide guitar playing, which suggests the instrument had yet to attain the prominence it enjoyed by World War I. Mr. Kekuku himself seems to be the earliest Hawaiian guitar performer on record. He appeared as part of exotic dancer Toots Paka's Hawaiian troupe on several two- and four-minute Edison cylinders announced in the company's December 1909 lists. Additional cylinders featured Kekuku as soloist and in duet with John Paaluhi. By 1909 the cylinder format was losing out in competition with discs, and the Paka/Kekuku records made no discernible impact. The Paka troupe returned to record for several companies, and their discs sold well in the 1910s.

More significant was the Hawaiian Quintette, which spent the 1912-13 season as part of Richard Walton Tully's *Bird of Paradise* dramatic cast at New York City's Winter Garden. The Victor Talking Machine Company invited the Quintette to make an extended series of recordings in April 1913 which became immediately popular and remained in the catalog until the end of the acoustic recording era in the mid-1920s. The group's steel guitarist Walter Kolomoku recorded one solo, "Hawaiian Melodies." He was also prominently featured on the Quintette's versions of "Tomi Tomi" and "Honolulu Tom Boy," energetic

hulas which also featured feisty harmony singing and shouting. These were the first versions of these standard repertoire pieces to be widely circulated. By 1914, more Hawaiian guitarists were busy in vaudeville and recording studios. As their music swept the country, guitar sales boomed, and Tin Pan Alley began churning out one Hawaii-flavored hit after another.

By the 1920s, Hawaiian guitarists were experimenting with other popular styles. Sam Moore recorded with a "steel octo-chorda" in 1921. His "Laughing Rag" was made three times--for Victor, Gennett and OKeh. In 1922, Mexican steel guitarist Jóse A. Encinas recorded several solos for OKeh, including a startling hybrid piece called "Lupe," which he described as a "paso doble flamenco." During the rest of the 1920s, a number of Hawaiians played rags and blues on record, especially after wood and metal bodied resophonic guitars were introduced by National in the late 1920s. Their louder sound found favor with both genuine Hawaiians and mainland wannabes, who bought the new instruments in large numbers. Popular soloists like Andy Sannella and Roy Smeck soloed with them on numerous dance band records, while Polynesian stylists like Sol Hoopii, Benny Nawahi and Frank Ferrera turned out pop tunes and instrumentals with island themes. Even Los Angeles *cancioneros* David and Luis Bañuelos (Hermanos Bañuelos) used a steel on popular records made for several companies in the 1920s.

Guitar in Early Blues and Country Music Recordings

Of all American styles, early blues and country music depended most extensively on the guitar. Its size and price made it accessible, affordable and ultimately emblematic of ramblers throughout the south and west. The songs and music of Riley Puckett, Blind Blake, Sylvester Weaver, Sam McGee, Jimmie Rodgers, the Carter Family, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Charlie Patton and Lonnie Johnson brought guitars permanently to center stage, paving the way for everyone from 1930s singing cowboys to 1990s rock stars.

Pioneering country steel players in the 1920s included Maybelle Carter, Jimmie Tarlton and Cliff Carlisle. Carter did not feature the steel on Carter Family records after 1930. Carlisle was still featuring the instrument professionally in the mid-1940s. Recorded evidence suggests that he'd acquired a resophonic guitar by 1932. When Roy Acuff made his first records for the American Record Company (ARC) in 1936, his Knoxville-based Crazy Tennesseeans included dobroist James Clell Summey (who later worked as "Cousin Jody" on the Grand Ole Opry).

Acuff's first major hit was made in Birmingham, Alabama on March 22, 1937, and featured Summey on a version of the old Hawaiian hula "Maui Chimes." With a bow to Bob Wills' "Steel Guitar Rag," it was retitled "Steel Guitar Chimes," and it ensured the presence of the dobro in southeastern country music for decades to come. When it looked as though the dobro would be eclipsed by conventional electric steels in the mid-1950s, bluegrass groups like those of Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs, the Osborne Brothers and the Country Gentlemen gave the dobro a new lease on life which it still enjoys.

Blind Willie Dunn? This is really Eddie Lang from an April 30, 1929 session. Also present were Lonnie Johnson, Hoagy Carmichael, and J.C. Johnson.

In the blues world, resophonic guitars played in the conventional Spanish position achieved a brief prominence in the 1930s, before electric instruments took their place. Previously, Tampa Red (Hudson Whittaker) had played a National "gold guitar" in the late '20s, which used a form of resonator. Bo Carter of Jackson, Mississippi began using a resophonic guitar on his 1934 recordings. Blind Boy Fuller and Rev. Gary Davis used similar instruments for their first recordings in July 1935. Davis didn't record again until 1949, but Fuller used his National consistently on the 100+ songs he recorded over the next five years. The instrument became an integral part of the Fuller and Carter sound, ensuring its prominence in blues for the rest of the decade. A few performers, notably Kokomo Arnold and Casey Bill Weldon ("The Hawaiian Guitar Wizard"), played resophonic slide guitars.

Italian-American Pioneers

The first notable non-Hawaiian guitar soloist was Nick Lucas (Lucanese), who recorded two pieces, "Pickin' the Guitar" and "Teasin' the Frets" for both Pathé (1922) and Brunswick (1923). Lucas was a younger brother of accordionist Frank Lucanese, one third of the popular instrumental trio I Tre Vagabundi (The Three Vagabonds), which recorded traditional Italian waltzes and mazurkas from 1916-20. Nick Lucas's guitar pieces stayed in his repertoire even after he established himself as a popular singer. Brunswick re-recorded them for a third time in 1932.

In 1932 Nick Lucas re-recorded numbers he cut for Pathé and Brunswick in the early '20s, which may be the first jazz-oriented solo guitar recordings.

Other Italian-American string soloists made some remarkable records before the depression, though they were marketed primarily to Italian-speaking audiences. The best, like Giovanni Giovale, Bernardo de Pace and Giovanni Vicari, were primarily mandolinists. Vicari made a few guitar records in 1929-30. Another excellent soloist, one G. Cammarato, made a single disc for Columbia in 1929. All can be heard on a recent CD, Italian String Virtuosi (Rounder 1095).

Another Italian-American guitarist, Eddie Lang, was born Salvatore Massaro. He joined a popular novelty group called the Mound City Blue Blowers in 1924, where his guitar could be heard alongside a comb, kazoo and banjo. Later he made a number of sides as the partner of jazz violinist Joe Venuti and occasionally as a soloist. Lang gave himself another name, "Blind Willie Dunn," when he recorded several superb duets with St. Louis bluesman Lonnie Johnson, which were directed toward the so-called "race" market.

The versatile Johnson recorded many memorable blues from 1925 through the 1960s, some good solo pieces, and jazz collaborations with Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong and McKinney's Cotton Pickers.

Guitar in Jazz and Dance Bands Recordings

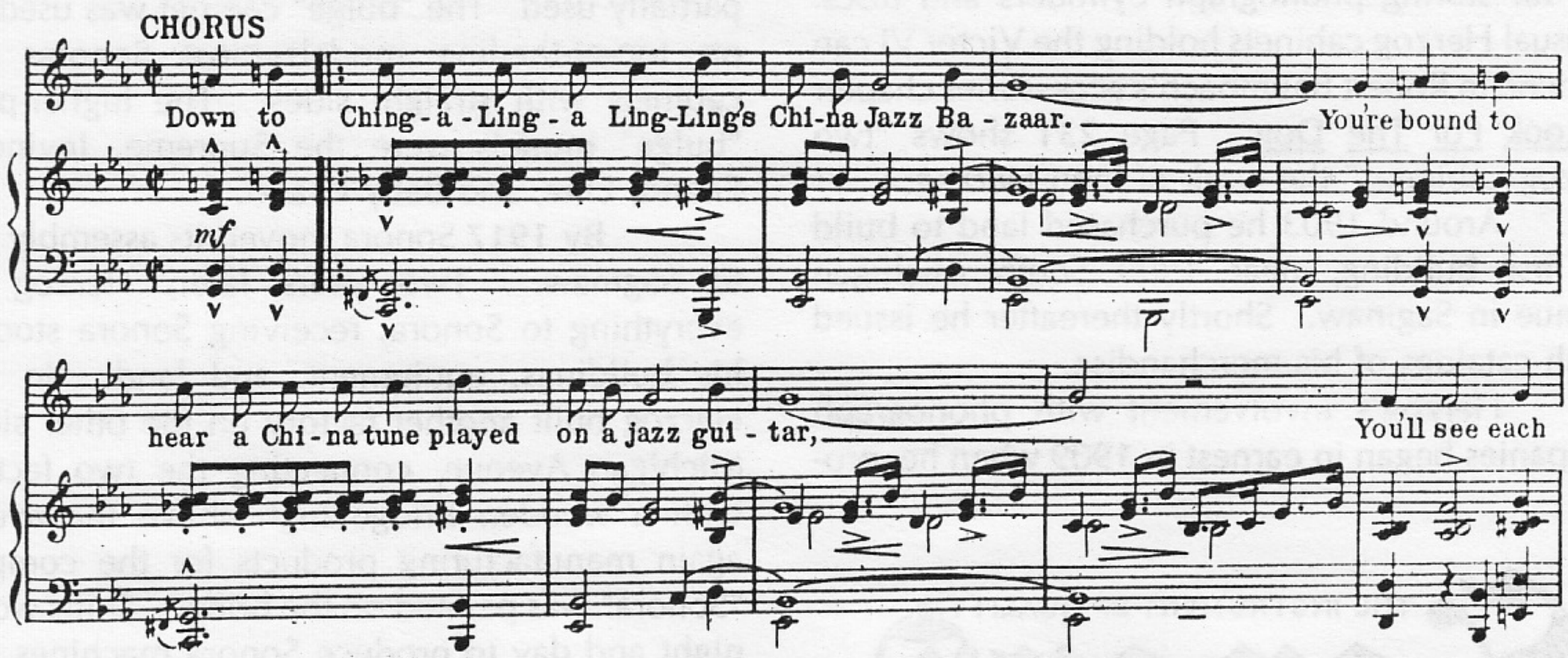
Jazz and dance bands of the 1920s didn't feature many guitar players, preferring to rely on the louder tenor banjo in their rhythm sections. Most guitarists on records were not musicians of remarkable ability, though some records of Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers prove an exception. On several Chicago-made sides from

1926-7, Morton made use of fellow New Orleanians Johnny St. Cyr and Arthur "Bud" Scott as ensemble players and soloists. After Morton moved to New York in 1928, guitarists Lee Blair and Bernard Addison could be heard on many of his records.

Cal Smith was a Louisville banjoist who acquired a tenor guitar in the late '20s. He worked with fiddler Clifford Hayes' Dixieland Jug Blowers on two Chicago Victor sessions in 1926 and 1927. On the second date, Hayes made an additional side with a quartet drawn from the Jug Blowers, called the Louisville Stompers. "Blue Guitar Stomp" featured Cal Smith on five relaxed bluesy single-string choruses. It became a hit and Victor persuaded Johnny Dodds' band to record a series of follow-up "concertos": "Blue Clarinet Stomp," "Blue Piano Stomp," "Blue Washboard Stomp" and "Bull Fiddle Blues." Clifford Hayes then abandoned the jug band format and the Louisville Stompers continued to feature Smith on "The Tenor Guitar Fiend" and other appealing instrumentals in 1928-9. Smith and Hayes made a final recorded appearance in 1931 on Victor's only expedition to Louisville, when the jug band reappeared to back Jimmie Rodgers on "My Good Gal's Gone," which had the final recorded Cal Smith solo. "Banjo" Ikey Robinson traded in his banjo for a resophonic tenor guitar around 1930. He worked with Fletcher Henderson awhile and recorded some energetic solos with Clarence Williams' Jug Band in 1933.

Reissues have kept pioneering blues, jazz and country music available, though they've served pre-1920s guitarists poorly. Techniques in the pre-1925 acoustic recording era made it difficult to record the guitar well, but modern sound restoration techniques can go a long way to compensate for the problems of early recordings. Yes, getting good samples of early guitar together and having them effectively remastered would involve a major effort. But I hope it happens. Given the guitar's pre-eminence in modern music, it would be useful to have some of the guitar music from long ago made available again.

Dick Spottswood lives and works in University Park, Maryland. He compiled <u>Ethnic Music On Records</u>, published in seven volumes by the University of Illinois Press in 1990. He is trying to keep it up to date with corrections/additions and remains grateful for any help.



Billy Murray refers to "jazz guitar" on a recording made in 1920--long before jazz guitarists recorded. He provided the vocal to "Ching-a Ling's Jazz Bazaar," a 12-inch disc featuring Joseph C. Smith's Orchestra (Victor 35695). The lyrics refer to a jazz guitar (see above), not jazz played on guitar. Jazz guitars would not be designed for a few more years. Murray's vocal goes uncredited on the Victor label.

JOHN HERZOG:
A TRIBUTE TO A PHONOGRAPH MANUFACTURER

BY RONALD J. PUTZ

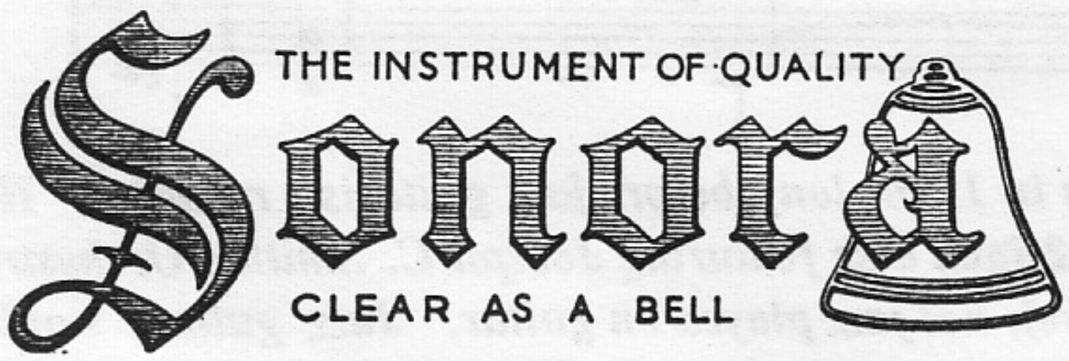
John Herzog had the distinction of being closely associated with three different phonograph companies. His work for Sonora was especially important since he was responsible for the distinctive "bulge" found on many Sonora cabinets. His story is worth telling. Since I live in Michigan, I have had good opportunities to trace Herzog's contribution to phonograph manufacturing.

Herzog was born in 1867 in Frankenmuth, Michigan, a rural community settled by German immigrants. As a young man he left Frankenmuth for Grand Rapids so he could study the art of furniture-making. For 12 years he worked in Grand Rapids and then for three years studied his craft in Europe.

In 1899 he settled in Saginaw and set up shop, soon making cabinets and furniture. On June 12, 1901, he incorporated his Herzog Art Furniture Company, making desks, pianos, benches, other items. He also made special cabinets for storing phonograph cylinders and discs. Unusual Herzog cabinets holding the Victor VI can be found in Robert Baumbach's accessories chapter in Look For The Dog. Page 231 shows "two Herzog cabinets," the work of John Herzog.

Around 1903 he purchased land to build his first building, near 1900 South Michigan Avenue in Saginaw. Shortly thereafter he issued lavish catalogs of his merchandise.

Herzog's involvement with phonograph companies began in earnest in 1909 when he produced Amberola I cabinets for Edison, but the Edison Company was dissatisfied with Herzog's work, correcting the Herzog Company's cabinets before shipping the Amberola I machines to dealers. The Edison Company never used Herzog's products again, but Herzog remained friendly with Thomas Edison. When Herzog was to lay the cornerstone for an addition to the Herzog facility on May 10, 1913, he invited Edison to attend the ceremony (Edison declined the invitation to attend). To the end of his life, Herzog held Edison in high esteem and proudly owned an Edison portrait given to Herzog by Edison himself.



Herzog's involvement with Sonora is complicated. Herzog probably began making cabinets for Sonora in 1913, when the Sonora Company was founded (some have said Herzog made Sonora cabinets in 1910 but that is too early a date). In 1912 and 1918 Herzog was granted patents for "bulge" patterns in cabinets that Sonora partially used. The "bulge" cabinet was used only on top-of-the-line models--most Sonoras have cabinets with straight sides. The higher-priced "bulge" models were the Supreme, Invincible, Grand, Elite, and Baby Grand.

By 1917 Sonora moved its assembly plant to Saginaw. Two years later, Herzog sold everything to Sonora, receiving Sonora stock for his buildings, equipment, and land. In 1921 Herzog built another factory on the other side of Michigan Avenue, connecting the two factories with a wooden bridge high above the avenue, again manufacturing products for the company. "Sonora" was painted on the bridge. Shifts worked night and day to produce Sonora machines, with one source suggesting 600 were made by day and 200 by night (most Sonora motors were imported from Switzerland). By the early 1920s Sonora was Saginaw's biggest employer. Herzog's production

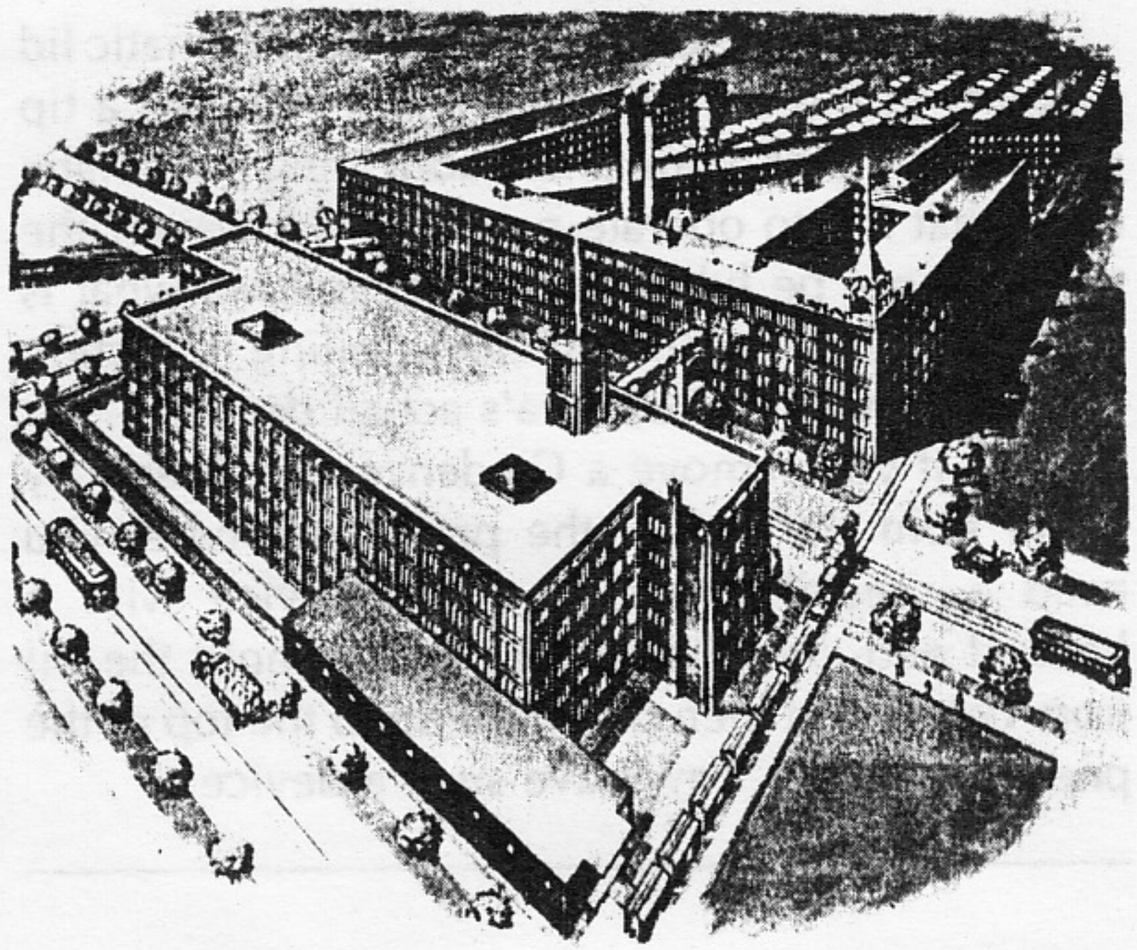
company was formally merged with Sonora in 1923, and production for 1923 was set at 60,000 units. Radio was gaining in popularity, and the 1924 Sonora catalog indicates Sonora was adding radio to some models by that year. In 1924 it reportedly made 1,400 cabinets each working day.

John Herzog was held in high esteem by his workers. He even established a night school for his employees so they could refine their wood working skills. In the early 1920s he had a home built for his family at 110 Braley in Saginaw, instructing that the two exterior porches take the shape of Sonora's bombé cabinets. Even bushes in the beautiful gardens surrounding the home were clipped and trimmed to take on the famous "bulge" shape.

In Herzog's time, Sonora was actually based in New York City. I have been unable to determine the state in which Sonora was incorporated. Around July of 1927 Herzog was forced out of Sonora by New York stockholders.

John Herzog designed the bombé cabinets of higher priced Sonora machines--the "bulge" cabinets.

Below is the Saginaw factory around 1923--only a basement wall remains today.



Herzog helped manufacture one other brand of phonograph, the Vitanola. In May of 1907, Herzog headed another company called the Saginaw Table and Cabinet Company, located on Wheeler Street in Saginaw, not far from the Michigan Avenue buildings. By 1919 this company had entered into a partnership with Moses Schiff and his sons Samuel and Benjamin (all of Chicago) to manufacture the Vitanola at the Wheeler Street site. Although the Vitanola was evidently produced in Saginaw until the mid-1920s, Herzog was no longer involved after 1922. Part of the Wheeler Street building exists today whereas all of the huge complex of Sonora buildings were demolished years ago (a trace of the main building's lowest level remains). Sonora went bankrupt in 1930.

John Herzog's work did not end with his leaving Sonora. With son John L. and daughter Clara, he sold furniture in Saginaw, working at this business until his death on July 8, 1955.

RONALD J. PUTZ LIVES IN BAY CITY, MICHIGAN. IF YOU HAVE MORE INFORMATION ON JOHN HERZOG, DROP V78J A LINE.

LUBRICATING PNEUMATIC LID SUPPORTS

BY RON PENDERGRAFT

In my article about adjusting pneumatic lid supports in the third issue of V78J, I quoted a tip given in a Victor manual for lubricating pneumatic tubes that fail to operate properly. However, the tubes cannot be lubricated if one follows what is said in the manual. Victor's oiling direction conflicts with the Credenza's actual design.

If you remove a Credenza's back and try to oil from the top of the pneumatic tube, you need a special extended oiling device with a hooked end--one that allows you to hold the oil from below and then pump oil up to the top of the pneumatic tube. Few have such a device.

Patrick Meagher, son of V78J reader Michael Meagher, designed this Nipper dunce-cap parody.

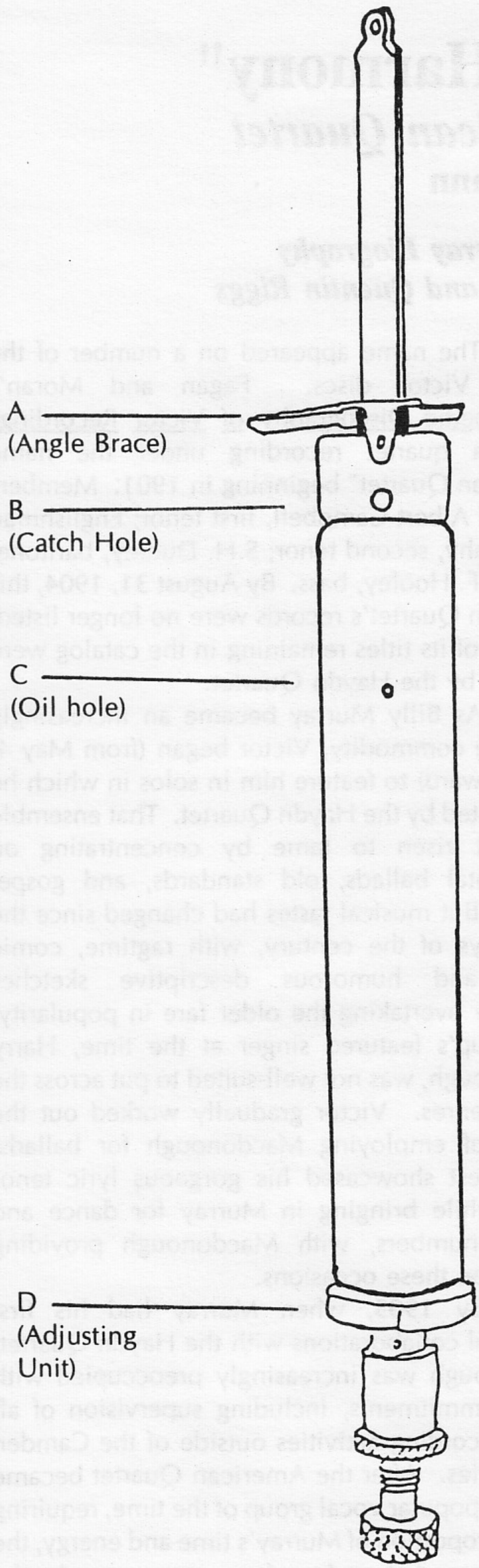
Suppose you try to oil from inside the turntable compartment, which I believe was the intent of Victor engineers. You need an extended nozzle if you wish to deposit oil with any accuracy and without making a mess. If you work from inside the turntable compartment, you cannot see precisely where the top of the tube is since it is covered by an angle brace (see A in the drawing) and the lid support escutcheon. I don't think the average homeowner in 1925 had the oiling device needed to do the job properly. Victor simply did not make it easy to lubricate a pneumatic tube.

I have found other ways to lubricate. Sometimes a support tube can be conveniently positioned, or turned around, so that a small hole is exposed. See item C. (Always be careful as you turn the tubes since they can crack due to age.) I believe this hole was designed not as an auxiliary air vent but as an oil hole, small as it is. Victor manuals do not identify it as an oil hole--they say nothing about it. The hole can be found about 2 3/4 inches from the tube's top. However, not every tube has this hole.

You may oil when the lid is up or down. If you pump a bit of oil through this small hole when the lid is up, the piston washer will be above the hole and the oil will run down the inside of the tube and settle at the bottom. If the lid is down, the piston washer will be below the hole and the oil will then settle on the washer mount. In any case, the tube's normal operation will redistribute the oil to the washer and lubricate the inside tube.

Do not apply too much oil since excess oil will only sit at the bottom of the tube and possibly work its way out of the vent hole. To protect Victor albums from oil that may spray out of the air vent hole, wrap a small piece of paper towel around the adjusting end of the tube and secure it with tape. Change the towel as needed. It will not interfere with a tube's operation.

Oiling or greasing the ball bearings for the catch (see item B) is also a problem. Unless you



have a special oiling device, I suggest you remove the tube or tubes from the machine and perform a lube job. First lift the lid. You will find that the piston stem (lid brace) is attached to the lid from a plate that is itself attached to the lid by four screws, with a screw and a nut securing the stem onto the mounting plate. Separate the stem from the mounting plate. After detaching, I cover the stem's end with a towel in case the lid comes forward. The towel prevents the inside lid from being scratched. Perhaps someone can hold the lid open to prevent accidents, and it helps to tackle only one tube at a time--lube one and replace it before working on the other tube.

Next remove the two screws that attach the escutcheon onto the cabinet. (When you later reassemble, I recommend you place each screw back in its original place.) As you remove screws, you will notice that the tube will descend from its position. The back of the machine will be off, and you should catch the tube so it does not fall.

With the tube out and away from the machine, put oil and grease where needed. I do not advise removing the adjusting unit, where it is attached at the end of the tube (see item D), since the tube's end may have become brittle and may crack. With the tube out of the cabinet, check for cracks, which can lead to reduced air pressure.

Another method of oiling the tube when it is actually out of the cabinet is to remove the adjusting screw, lock nut, compression springs, air vent ball bearing seat, and ball bearing. Turn the tube upside down and place oil into the ball bearing hole. Before you do this, put a small screwdriver in the ball bearing hole to check if the leather washer attachment screw is secured (the piston rod must be pushed forward).

I have always used neatsfoot oil, which is the oil that Victor recommended if a product is made of leather. Readers who know of a better oil available today should drop V78J a line.

RON PENDERGRAFT LIVES IN FREMONT, CALIFORNIA. SPECIAL THANKS TO NOEL L. WILLIAMS FOR THE TUBE DRAWING.

"In The Land Of Harmony"

A History of The American Quartet

by Frank Hoffmann

An Excerpt from The Billy Murray Biography
by Frank Hoffmann, Dick Carty, and Quentin Riggs

The American Quartet was formed in 1909. It came into being due to a contract Billy Murray signed which restricted his services to Victor for discs and Edison for cylinders. Jim Walsh writes in the February 1970 issue of Hobbies, "For several years [Murray] had been singing frequently on Victor records with the assistance of the Haydn Quartet, but now it was decided there was a need for a foursome in which he would star. So John Bieling and Hooley were borrowed from the Haydn Quartet (in which, however, they continued to sing) and Porter was brought in from the Peerless, where he had been singing baritone."

Victor christened the new lineup the American Quartet while Edison called it the Premier Quartet. The name "American Quartet" had been employed by various ensembles on recordings for almost a decade. The March 1899 issue of The Phonoscope noted that John Bieling, Jere Mahoney, S.H. Dudley, and William F. Hooley recorded for Edison as the Edison Male Quartet, for Berliner as the Haydn Quartet, and for other companies as the American Quartet. The July 1899 issue of that publication indicated that a group making cylinders for Reed, Dawson and Company (located at 74 Cortland Street, New York, and 516 Broad Street, Newark) was "The Original American Quartet." Whether this aggregate was the one cited in March is unknown.

Walsh notes that in 1900, after Harry Macdonough succeeded Mahoney as second tenor, the group was represented by its own manufacturing firm, the American Record Company. The company specialized in producing cylinders as requested by customer order. Also, the 1902 Edison Bell catalog listed a series of recordings credited to the American Quartet.

The name appeared on a number of the earliest Victor discs. Fagan and Moran's Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings shows a quartet recording under the name "American Quartet" beginning in 1901. Members included Albert Campbell, first tenor; Englishman W.T. Leahy, second tenor; S.H. Dudley, baritone; William F. Hooley, bass. By August 31, 1904, this American Quartet's records were no longer listed, and any of its titles remaining in the catalog were remakes by the Haydn Quartet.

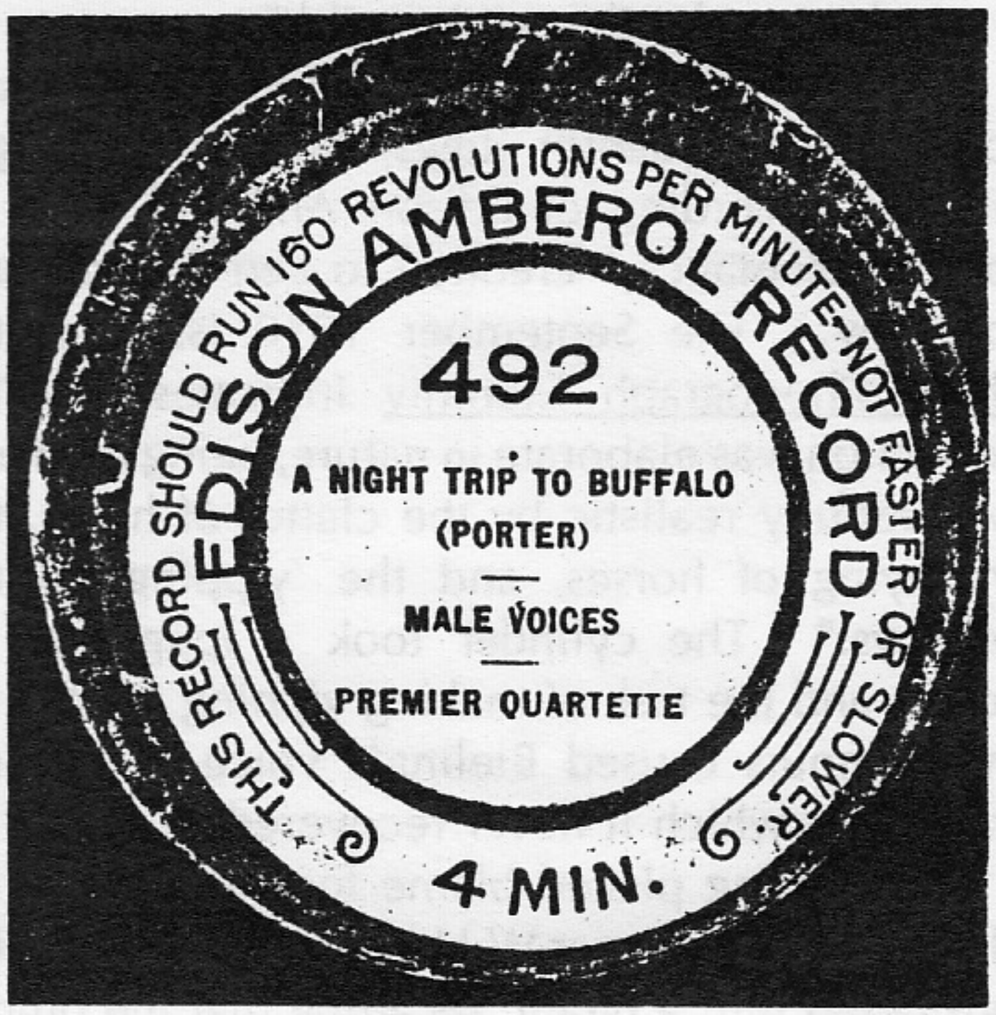
As Billy Murray became an increasingly bankable commodity, Victor began (from May 4, 1905 onward) to feature him in solos in which he was assisted by the Haydn Quartet. That ensemble had first risen to fame by concentrating on sentimental ballads, old standards, and gospel hymns. But musical tastes had changed since the early days of the century, with ragtime, comic songs, and humorous descriptive sketches gradually overtaking the older fare in popularity. The group's featured singer at the time, Harry Macdonough, was not well-suited to put across the newer genres. Victor gradually worked out the pattern of employing Macdonough for ballads, which best showcased his gorgeous lyric tenor voice, while bringing in Murray for dance and novelty numbers, with Macdonough providing support on these occasions.

By 1905, when Murray had his first successful collaborations with the Haydn Quartet, Macdonough was increasingly preoccupied with other commitments, including supervision of all Victor recording activities outside of the Camden laboratories. After the American Quartet became the most popular vocal group of the time, requiring a large proportion of Murray's time and energy, the Haydn limped along for a few more years in the

face of lessened demand for its services with Macdonough at the helm. Finally, the demands of Macdonough's executive responsibilities led to a severe curtailment of his singing activity, and the Haydn Quartet quietly disbanded in 1914. Macdonough's last recording, issued in February 1920, was "Peggy," a dance number by Joseph C. Smith's Orchestra, on which he sang the vocal refrain.

Although Murray had been making records for a dozen years when the American Quartet was formed in 1909, his age of 31 combined with his reputation for wild behavior undoubtedly made him appear like a mere youth to the other members. Bieling, a New York City native, was almost 40; Porter, from Buffalo, New York, was 44; and Hooley, born in London, England, was 47.

The American Quartet's debut release, "Denver Town," was recorded in February 1909 and first appeared in the May 1909 Victor monthly supplement. Composed by George L. Botsford and Harry Breen, this cowboy song followed in the wake of the Harry Williams and Egbert Van Alstyne's highly successful "Cheyenne" (Murray's recording of it enjoyed brisk sales). Botsford arranged most of the material recorded by the American Quartet over the next several years.



Until 1920, the American Quartet is the same as Edison's Premier Quartet. This is from 1910.

The Victor supplement called this quartet "a new organization of male voices which makes its bid for popular favor with a 'cowboy' number, now quite in vogue. No praise for this new quartet is needed here, as the record speaks for itself--the voices being well-balanced, the words distinct and the music sung with spirit and precision."

First issued on a 10-inch single-faced disc (5683) and retailing for 60 cents, "Denver Town" was reissued on 16521 along with "A Night Trip to Buffalo" several months later. The latter--a comedy sketch--had first been recorded by one of the earlier variants of the American Quartet at the turn of the century and was redone by the Haydn shortly thereafter. Victor literature called the updated American version "much improved and funnier" than its antecedents.

The Edison label selected "Denver Town" as the inaugural release of the Premier Quartet as well. The June 1909 installment of the New Phonogram called it "another cowboy song, telling how a cowboy wooed and won his bride. It is sung by a new combination of artists, including Will Oakland, John H. Biehling [sic], Billy Murray and W.F. Hooley." Walsh questioned the likelihood of Will Oakland appearing on this cylinder, noting that Oakland wasn't involved with the Victor recording, and that quartets were never comprised of a counter-tenor, two tenors, and a bass. Baritones were so important to male quartets that when Porter did not appear for a key session dedicated to the recutting of the master of "Casey Jones" by the American approximately one year later, orchestra leader Walter B. Rogers was recruited as a last minute replacement for baritone.

The American Quartet's best period was the five-year span from its first release until Bieling was compelled to leave in 1913 due to throat problems. Walsh states in the February 1970 issue of Hobbies that during this time "the Quartet cut into wax many of the greatest song hits in American musical history, and a large number of its discs and cylinders had sales that were remarkable for that period." The November 1914 installment of the Victor record catalog included these incredibly popular titles:

--And the Green Grass Grew All Around
--Any Little Girl That's a Nice Little Girl
--Baby Rose
--Casey Jones
--Come, Josephine, in My Flying Machine
--Grizzly Bear
--Hitchy Koo
--I Want a Girl (Just Like the Girl That Married Dear Old Dad)
--Mary Was My Mother's Name
--Moonlight Bay
--Oh, You Beautiful Doll
--On the Banks of the Wabash
--On the Mississippi
--Ragtime Violin
--Row, Row, Row
--Sailing Down the Chesapeake Bay
--That Mysterious Rag

The catalog also listed the following by the Heidelberg Quintet, which consisted of the Quartet combined with counter-tenor Will Oakland:

--By the Beautiful Sea
--Floating Down the River
--Harmony Bay
--In Apple Blossom Time
--In the Heart of the Kentucky Hills
--My Little Lovin' Sugar Babe
--Teasing Moon
--Waiting for the Robert E. Lee
--Way Down South
--You're a Great Big Blue-Eyed Baby

Most of these titles were also released on Edison cylinders in the 2-minute Standard, 4-minute Amberol, and 4-minute Blue Amberol configurations.

"Casey Jones" was the ensemble's top seller. Walsh believed that "It's A Long, Long Way to Tipperary," recorded shortly after Bieling had left the group and released in November 1914, was probably second to "Casey Jones" in sales.

In December 1912, the Edison Company abandoned a longstanding commitment to making only cylinders by formally introducing Edison disc phonographs and Diamond Disc records. The firm made overtures to Victor, which still had Murray under exclusive contract for discs, about renegotiating the old arrangement. An agreement was reached and Murray's earliest credited Diamond Discs--"California and You," "I'm Goin' Back to Louisiana," and "My Croony Melody"--were released in the latter part of 1914 (he can be heard on some earlier Diamond Discs but he is not credited). The Quartet's earliest Edison discs appeared several months later under the Premier appellation. They were "Tennessee, I Hear You Calling Me" (50233), "I'm On My Way to Dublin Bay" (50245), and "Moonlight Bay" (50258). They were recorded with the new lineup including tenor Robert D. Armour in Bieling's place.

The onset of John Bieling's throat problems represented the American Quartet's first major crisis. Bieling had been a part of the first commercial recording group, the Manhansset Quartet, recording cylinders with that unit by 1894. In early years he was in high demand as both a duet singer and as a quartet first tenor. This was at a time when many studio takes were necessary to produce sufficient copies of a recording to satisfy public demand. Macdonough described Bieling as having "a voice in a million, to stand up under the work it did."

Bieling's voice suffered from constant use. According to Quentin Riggs, the trouble began with the recording of Edison Amberol 552, "A Cowboy Romance," credited to Len Spencer and Company. The September 1910 issue of the Edison Phonograph Monthly indicates that the production was elaborate in nature, being rendered "wonderfully realistic by the clatter of hoofs, the whinnying of horses, and the 'yipping' of the cowboys." The cylinder took a long time to record, and the task of making yipping sounds for several hours caused Bieling's voice to suffer a strain from which it never recovered.

Bieling placed blame for the incident on Edison studio manager W.H.H. Cronkhite. Bieling considered him a tyrant, recalling that the official acted like a slave-driver during the session for "A Cowboy Romance." When someone mentioned

Cronkhite's name at the second John Bieling Day (a reunion of artists) on September 10, 1947, Bieling responded bitterly, "I hope he's in hell!"

Bieling quit singing in mid-1913. His last Quartet record, "Floating Down the River" (Victor 17438), was recorded in June or July of 1913 and released in November 1913. He was replaced in late 1913 by Robert D. Armour, a young tenor who had come to New York from his home town of Mobile, Alabama in 1909 to pursue a singing career. Armour stayed with the quartet until the middle of 1915, at which time he was replaced by John Young.

Armour sang on the following American Quartet recordings:

--Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm (17534)
--All Aboard for Dixieland (17535)
--At the Mississippi Cabaret (17650)

The latter release, which had each quartet member take a turn singing a solo line, showed Armour's voice to good effect. The first verse began as follows:

Murray: I came to town just to take in the sights.
Porter: I heard about all the music and lights.
Hooley: I've seen each cafe.
Armour: Every cabaret.

Armour also sang on "Do You Take This Woman For Your Lawful Wife? (17554), "It's a Long, Long Way to Tipperary" (17639), "When You Wore a Tulip and I Wore a Big Red Rose" (17652).

Bieling dropped out of the Haydn Quartet and Heidelberg Quintet at the same time he left the American. No announcement was made of his departure from recording--nor of his subsequent employment as a traveling salesman for a Victor distributor based in New York, though the March 1915 issue of The Voice of the Victor says this: "John H. Bieling, who has been a member of the road staff of the New York Talking Machine Company...for the past year, resigned from his position recently in order to enter business himself as a Victor dealer. Before commencing work in the retail field Mr. Bieling will take a short vacation, which he has well earned after his many years of active participation in the talking machine industry."

Bieling opened a Victrola outlet in Hempstead, in the greater New York City area. He maintained it until his retirement in the 1930s.

Armour's last record with the American was "Back to Dixieland" (17783), probably recorded in March or April of 1915 and issued in July 1915. It appears he sang on all American Quartet releases for Victor between the number sequence 17534 and 17783. His involvement with the Haydn was evidently limited to the group's last two records, "The Woman Thou Gavest Me" (Victor 17544) and "'Cross the Great Divide" (Victor 17545), both released in April 1914.

In mid-1915, Victor recruited an industry fixture, John Young, to fill Armour's role in the

By the time this Diamond Disc was issued in 1921 (this is Edison's first with a paper label--reverse side is "Sunnyside Sal"), the Premier Quartet was no longer the same as the American. Billy Jones is tenor here, not Billy Murray. But the American did record this song for Victor 18794.

American Quartet. Young was then active as the tenor of the gospel duet team, "Harry Anthony and James F. Harrison" (kiddingly termed "The Come-to-Jesus Twins" by Murray, who enjoyed needling fellow recording artists), in addition to singing in the Criterion Quartet, whose other personnel included Horatio Rench, second tenor; George W. Reardon, baritone; and Donald Chalmers, bass. Young continued to be associated with these acts well into the 1920s.

The new edition of the Quartet enjoyed great success, beginning with its first Victor release, "War Song Medley" (17823). Walsh stated that virtually all of its recordings could be classified as "big sellers." They include these:

--America, I Love You
--Gasoline Gus and His Jitney Bus
--Goodbye, Broadway, Hello, France
--Keep Your Head Down, Fritzie Boy
--Oh Johnny, Oh Johnny, Oh
--Over There
--Where Do We Go from Here
--You're a Grand Old Flag (remake of 1906 recording)

The Quartet changed when Hooley died on October 12, 1918 in a New York City hospital. Hooley's decline in health had been relatively sudden. He had sung at a Victor recording session on August 1, 1918. Basso Donald Chalmers, a member of the Criterion Quartet like Young, was selected as Hooley's replacement.

After Murray became a free-lance artist in 1918 the American Quartet recorded for virtually every company of note except Brunswick, whose recording activities didn't start until late 1919. Walsh has noted a discrepancy in names given the group by these companies. While most companies designated the group as the "Premier-American Quartet," Columbia switched between "American" and "Premier-American" and Okeh stuck with "American Quartet." The Aeolian-Vocalion disc of "Anything Is Nice If It Comes From Dixieland" was credited to the "Murray Quartet."

After a flurry of activity which lasted nearly two years, the Murray-Porter-Young-Chalmers ensemble was abruptly retired as a recording entity. In the summer of 1920 Henry Burr, a first-rate singer of sentimental songs as well as an astute businessman, approached Murray with a proposition. Burr wanted to negotiate a 10-year exclusive contract with Victor, a package deal involving Murray and the members of the Peerless Quartet (Burr, second tenor; Albert Campbell, first tenor; John H. Meyer, baritone; and Frank Croxton, bass). The fees for the five singers would total $100,000 annually, or a million dollars for the entire ten-year period. The management agreed to this contract, unprecedented in phonograph history, and in the autumn of 1920 Murray and his associates became exclusive Victor artists. Murray and Burr received $25,000 each per year. The remaining $50,000 would be divided equally among the three other singers. According to the contract, the American Quartet would thereafter comprise Murray, Campbell, Meyer, and Croxton. The Peerless Quartet personnel would be unchanged.

This left Edison without personnel for its Premier Quartet, so the company assembled another group composed of Charles Hart, first tenor; Billy Jones, second tenor; Porter, baritone; and Harry Donaghy, bass. Because Edison held the exclusive right to use the Premier name, the new ensemble was known on other labels as either the Harmonizers or Harmonizers Quartet. The Premier Quartet name ceased to be used by Edison after 1922. Never very popular, the Harmonizers are believed to have disbanded at that time.

The American was almost defunct as a studio entity by the time Victor began using the electronic recording process. Though the Quartet's final release, "Alabamy Bound" (No. 19680) appeared in August 1925--two months after Victor began issuing electric discs--it was an acoustic recording, cut on May 20, 1925. It remained in the catalog for only fourteen months.

Group members took part in the first electrically

recorded disc made by Victor, the 12-inch "A Miniature Concert by the Eight Popular Victor Artists" (35753), which consisted of Campbell, Croxton, Meyer, and Murray as well as Henry Burr, Frank Banta, Monroe Silver, and Rudy Wiedoeft.

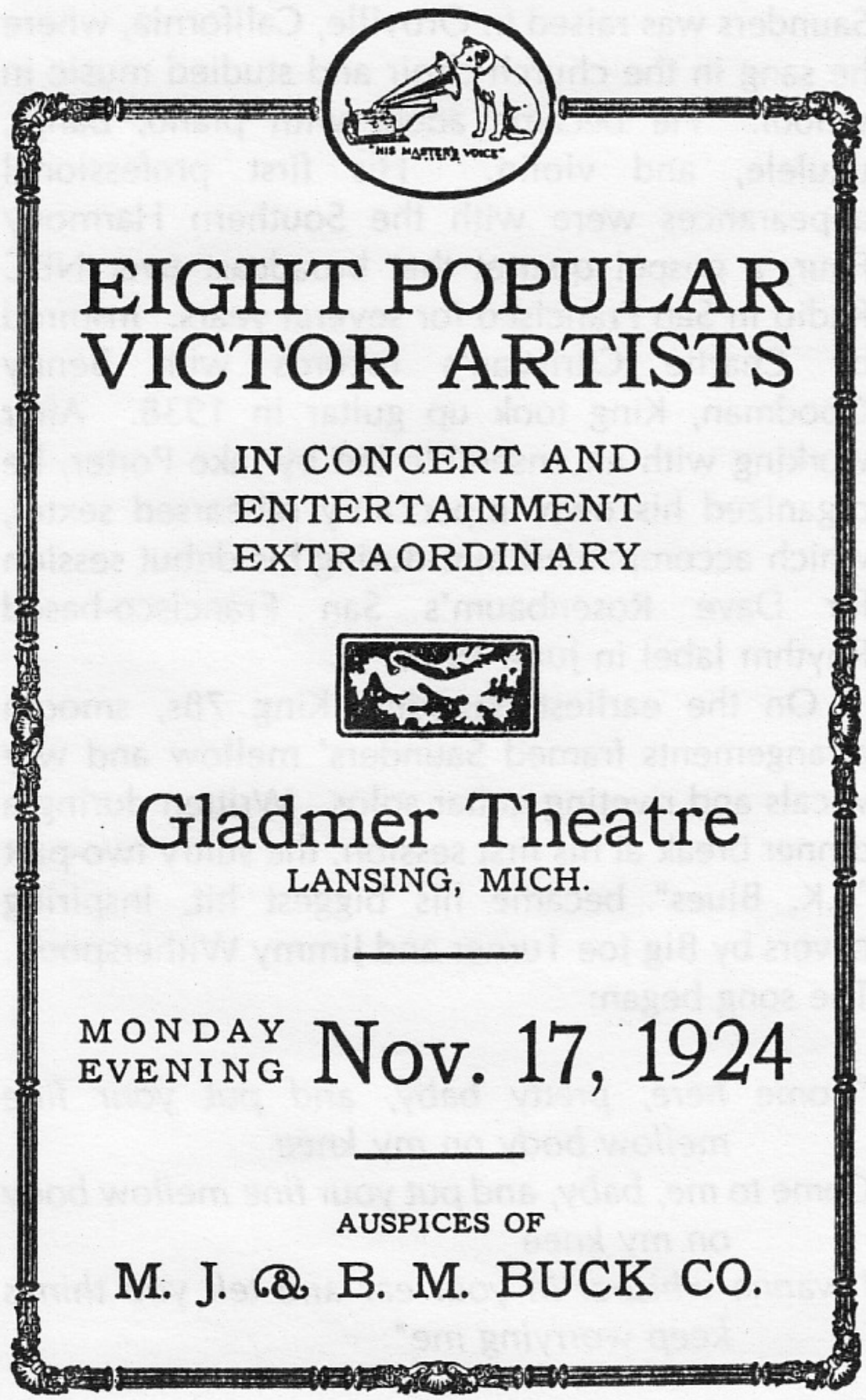
Despite this flurry of activity in the early days of electrical recording, Burr decided to disband the old lineup of the Peerless Quartet in the summer of 1925 and hire new singers. Murray reported to Walsh that the prime reason had been complaints by many Victor dealers that when John Meyer was in high spirits he "cut in so strong that he spoiled the record." Whatever the reason, Walsh surmised in the December 1969 issue of Hobbies that this "must have been a fairly sudden decision involving a great deal of ill feeling."

The replacements included Carl Mathieu, first tenor and comedian, a relative unknown at the time; James Stanley, a baritone who had some success recording for Pathe; and Stanley Baughman, bass. Victor heralded the change in its January 1926 record supplement, announcing a double-faced disc by "the new Peerless Quartet." On October 22, 1926, Murray collaborated with Mathieu, Baughman, and Stanley for the last American Quartet performance. The foursome recorded "Bring Back Those Minstrel Days" by the electronic process, but it was never issued.

Walsh questioned whether all discs of the final edition of the American included the Campbell-Meyer-Croxton lineup, saying "some of the 'last ditch' American Quartet records sound to my ears more as if they had been made by Young, Murray, Porter, and Chalmers than by the later group. It sounds to me, for instance, as if Young, rather than Campbell, sings first tenor in 'The High Brown Blues' and 'The Little Red School House'; and the bass seems more like Chalmers than Croxton."

Distinguished author and researcher William R. Moran has confirmed that Walsh's suspicions were correct, and that Murray was indeed reunited with his old confreres on the following dates: March 31, May 3, May 5, August 31, and September 13, 1922. Presumably the Peerless Quartet personnel was unavailable during that period. Riggs notes that in addition to the above coupling (Victor 18904), at least two other titles were recorded in 1922 by the 1918-1920 formation of the group: "Some Sunny Day" (Victor 18903) and "Childhood Days" (Victor 18959).

EDITOR'S NOTE: This excerpt from the Billy Murray biography has been modified slightly for V78J and documentation was not included because of space considerations.



Saunders King: S.K.'s Blues

By Jas Obrecht

More than a half-century after buying his first Saunders King 78, B.B. King still beams at the mention of his name. "Saunders King? I'm a big fan of his! He was one of the first of the people that played blues and had the beautiful sound of the electric guitar. He was a great singer. In fact, he was one of the people I idolized. I especially liked 'S.K. Blues'--still do! There was a part one and a part two to it. I also admired his 'St. James Infirmary' on Aladdin. To me, Saunders King was one of the greatest ever."

Born in Staple, Louisiana, on March 13, 1909, Saunders was raised in Oroville, California, where he sang in the church choir and studied music in school. He became adept with piano, banjo, ukulele, and violin. His first professional appearances were with the Southern Harmony Four, a gospel quartet that broadcast over NBC Radio in San Francisco for several years. Inspired by Charlie Christian's records with Benny Goodman, King took up guitar in 1938. After working with an ensemble led by Jake Porter, he organized his own impeccably rehearsed sextet, which accompanied him during his debut session for Dave Rosenbaum's San Francisco-based Rhythm label in June 1942.

On the earliest Saunders King 78s, smooth arrangements framed Saunders' mellow and wry vocals and riveting guitar solos. Written during a dinner break at his first session, the sultry two-part "S.K. Blues" became his biggest hit, inspiring covers by Big Joe Turner and Jimmy Witherspoon. The song began:

"Come here, pretty baby, and put your fine mellow body on my knee
Come to me, baby, and put your fine mellow body on my knee
I wanna whisper in your ear and tell you things keep worrying me"

The lyrics took a memorable detour when Saunders described buying his girlfriend "some hair" because "the good Lord gave her none." Then, in a stanza that would echo in other blues songs, Saunders sang:

"Give me back that wig I bought you, baby, and let your head go bald
Yes, give me back that wig I bought you, baby, and let your head go bald
You keep on mistreating me, baby, ooh, you will have no hair nor head at all"

As on many of his 78s, Saunders' voice projected a soothing tenderness, despite the lyrics' message. His guitar playing was strong and innovative. A fine sight-reader, King still possesses his hand-written chart from the original "S.K. Blues" session.

Other standouts from King's 1942 Rhythm dates were the unbeatably smooth "What's Your Story Morning Glory" and "S.K. Groove," during which Saunders paid tribute to Charlie Christian with his comping and elegantly paced solo.

During the war, while performers like Muddy Waters and Elmo James were thumping Delta-derived electric blues on Southern farms and in Chicago taverns, Saunders King was flying high, "giving out with the hot stuff" with one of the West Coast's hippest jump outfits. He was a regular at posh spots in San Francisco, Hollywood, and Chicago, toured the Southwest, and even worked the chitlin circuit.

Not long after World War II King recorded for Decca in Los Angeles, but legal entanglements prevented the session's release. He resumed cutting for Rhythm in '46, producing classic 78s such as the two-part "Lonesome Pillow Blues" and "After Hours" backed with "Why Was I Born," with its terrific guitar solo. "Write Me A Letter Blues" was paired with the bop-inspired "Swingin'," one of King's finest performances. Subsequent Rhythm sessions yielded further gems: "Stay Gone Blues"/"S.K. Jumps" and "Something's Worrying Me"/"2:00 A.M. Hop."

On record and stage, Saunders never restricted

himself to blues, delving into swing, ballads, bebop, and revitalized readings of standards such as "Summertime" and "Danny Boy." In newspaper ads from the late '40s, San Francisco's Club Savoy billed him as part of "The Greatest Sepia Show On The Coast," listing the "suave rhythms of Saunders King" just below headliner Art Tatum. Billie Holiday came to town and shared the bill with "The Red Hot Rhythms Of Saunders King," as did Sarah Vaughan and others.

Near the decade's end, the Bihari brothers purchased most of Saunders' Rhythm masters and invited him to cut new material for their Modern Records. King's first Modern offering was the ballad "Imagination" backed with "Empty Bedroom Blues," which features an early use of low-volume electric guitar distortion. Modern next paired "Danny Boy" with "Read The Good Book," which despite its title is far closer to a Louis Jordan jump than a gospel tune. The Biharis reissued the old Rhythm master of "S.K. Blues" as the two-part "(New) S.K. Blues." King's brief sojourn at the San Francisco-based Cava-Tone label produced a single 78, "September Song"/"Nobody Wants Me."

In March 1949, a Billboard ad proclaimed, "Here he is!!! The King of the Blues, Saunders King, and Aladdin got him!" Saunders' Aladdin debut, No. 3027, was his unforgettable version of "St. James Infirmary Blues" backed with his original

"S.K. Blues" was Saunders King's biggest hit.

"Little Girl." With their smooth guitar tones and still-fresh solos, these sides are among King's most vital recordings. He continued to expand his solo style on subsequent Aladdin releases, bending strings with aplomb on "Misery Blues" and stretching out nicely on "Stormy Night Blues." Cut in a superior studio, Saunders regards his Aladdin releases as his finest-sounding 78s.

By the early 1950s Saunders King's recording heyday was drawing to a close. He was in top form when he cut his potent "Summertime Boogie," released on RPM. (Issued on the Ace LP The First King Of The Blues, the unissued alternate take of "Summertime Boogie" is the more happening version: cascading horn lines bridge towards rock and roll, while Saunders' solo conjures the spirit of Charlie Christian.) In 1954 King produced a pair of memorable platters for the Biharis' Flair subsidiary, "My Close Friend"/"Going Mad" and "Quit Hangin' Around Me"/"Long Long Time." His final session as a leader, at Fantasy Records in 1961, produced stinging-guitar remakes of "S.K. Blues" and "What's Your Story Morning Glory," released as Galaxy 712.

During the ensuing decades Saunders continued to play blues in nightclubs around the San Francisco Bay Area, but he increasingly devoted himself to raising his children and composing and performing spiritual music. An '89 stroke has since slowed his musical activities.

Today the 86-year-old King and his wife Jo share a spacious home in San Rafael, California. The stack of charts Saunders has saved over the years hints at the broad scope of his musical interests. Among the yellowing pages are tunes by Ellington, Gershwin, Strayhorn, Coltrane, Rodgers & Hart, Charlie Parker, and the Beatles, as well as a chart for "Silver Dreams," which King sang on longtime son-in-law Carlos Santana's Oneness, Silver Dreams--Golden Reality LP. Our interview took place on July 28, 1995, with a follow-up several weeks later.

What attracted you to the electric guitar so early on?

The sound. I was trying to get a sound. I traded guitars, different types of boxes. I had an

acoustic Epiphone first, and the Epiphone gave me good sound. I tried the electric guitar and got a better sound.

Were you aware of the electric guitarists who recorded before Charlie Christian, such as Eddie Durham with Jimmie Lunceford or Floyd Smith with Andy Kirk?

Yeah. I'd go and watch Eddie Durham play. Oh, yeah. I was intrigued by the sound.

Do you remember the first time you saw an electric guitar?

Yes. I don't remember the year, but I remember the idea. It was at the Golden Gate Theater in San Francisco. There was a big band there playing with Alvino Rey, and I was intrigued by the sound he was getting, but he wasn't getting an electric sound. He was getting an acoustic sound. He had a large-size box, and he sat on the stage and played. I could hear him with just an acoustic box from where I was sitting quite a ways back. He had all kinds of boxes. He played one box and got one sound, and then all of a sudden he'd put it down and play another one. Alvino Rey--loved him. He played all kinds of melodies, different intricate things, and he led the band. It intrigued me.

When did you become aware of Charlie Christian? With the first Benny Goodman records?

Yes. He came out with something new, something different. He had a different sound, a complete sound, a big sound. It was with the Sextet with Lionel and them guys. He was great.

Did you have a favorite song of his?

"Seven Eleven." But I liked everything. No kidding--I liked anything he did. I even liked how he'd grunt and groan. He was a good musician.

Did you learn any of his music note for note?

No, I didn't want to. But I loved him. It's hard to get the notes, get the sound, of what he played.

It's not in the equipment.

No, it's the hands. The hands is what's happening.

Was Christian's "Blues In Bb" related to the song you recorded with the same title?

No. My piece "Bb Blues" was just a blues, and it had different hollers. I'd sing a verse, and the fellows in the band would sing a verse. We'd call them "holler tunes."

Was Charlie Christian the first guy who could hold his own alongside great horn players?

He was the first one. I was working at Jack's Tavern in San Francisco, and Charlie came in. He was here with Benny Goodman's band, playing with Lionel in the Sextet. He came in and everybody asked him to play. We were off the stand when Charlie came in. I said, "What do you want to play, Charlie?" He said, "'Stardust,' man," and that was it. He played by himself--I'll never forget it--on my guitar, which had a very bad pickup. He was taking a solo by himself, and he made such changes--crazy changes. In the clubs I was working, we sort of played it straight, but he made all those sounds and different changes. He was great. Charlie Christian didn't fool around.

Did you get a chance to talk to him?

Yeah. He was a great guy. At that time, quite a bit of drinking was going on, and he had been to different clubs. Club Alabam was around the corner, Harold Blackshear's Supper Club was happening too. So naturally he went with the fellas--wherever they'd go, he would go. Ben Webster was there. Ben Webster kept playing all night long. That's the first time I heard Charlie Christian in person, and he really could play. I was surprised. I'd heard his records--loved his records with the Sextet. But to see him play, see his action, was different. There was no one who could play like him.

What stood out?

He played rhythm, and then he'd go from rhythm into the solo, and he played by himself. That was different. It made all the difference in the

world. The audience in Jack's Tavern was rather small, and all the big band guys who came through there came by Jack's and played afterwards--like a jam session--and it was great. More bands came to town then than they do now, from what I hear.

Were there other impressive electric guitarists around then?

There was none that impressed me.

A lot of cats built their careers around sounding like Charlie Christian.

Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Even today, if you can play Charlie Christian note-for-note, you can find work in jazz circles.

Right.

What's your opinion of the rumor that Charlie died after smoking reefer while he was a patient in a TB ward?

I don't think so. Maybe. I think it was alcohol. The night he was in Jack's, people were giving him drinks. When they wanted to hear him play, they sent a drink over to him, and he was drinking one right after the other. I didn't drink at that time and I was wondering why he drank all the time. He didn't need to be drinking. He started perspiring--the water was running off of his face. He was playing "Stardust," and I thought then that he's got to be sick. He was in bad shape. Ben Webster came around and played with him half the night, and Charlie was still playin'. Then he went out in the streets and danced on the sidewalk.

Was he a good dancer?

For a dancer, he was a lot of guitar player! [*Laughs.*] He could dance. That's what he was gonna be--a dancer. He didn't want to be a guitar player; he wanted to dance.

Charlie did?

Sure! As soon as the music started, he wanted to dance. I don't know if it was the alcohol or what, but that's what he did. The waitress at the place I was working urged him on. She'd buy him drinks, because he stood by the bar doing dance steps. I think the alcohol killed him.

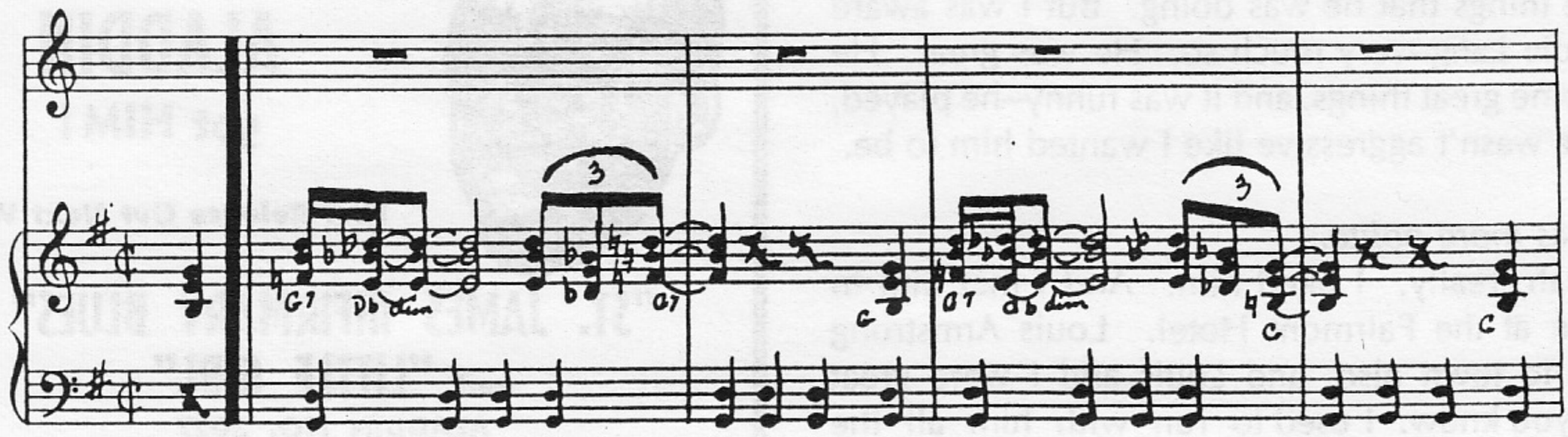
Was the fact that Charlie was playing in an integrated band important at the time?

Yeah, very important. And the things that he played, you didn't hear it all the time. And when you heard him play within the greatest band, it was so different. Quite different.

That must have been inspirational.

It was, it was. I didn't have a good amplifier; I had a fair amplifier. I was working with the guitar that I wanted to get the sound that I wanted, but I didn't have the amplifier. So I hooked my amplifier up to the speaker, which was up in the back of Jack's Tavern, and the sound was coming all the time. It would feedback sometimes, and I didn't know what to do. But it was good--it kept me solid. I had a chance to buy a guitar, and I didn't buy it. The guy that owned Jack's Tavern

S. K. BLUES



saw what I was drivin' at, so he bought the Epiphone for me and gave it to me. That started me out getting into something.

Before then you'd played ukulele and banjo and studied violin.

Yes.

Did you study solfeggio?

No.

Were your folks encouraging of your career in music?

Oh, yes. My father was a great singer, and my mother was a great singer.

Did you know as a child that that was what you wanted to do?

Well, no. But I studied hard to learn what I wanted to be. I wanted an answer. And the answer was music.

Did you take up electric guitar first or acoustic?

Acoustic.

Did you quit playing violin once you acquired a guitar?

Yeah. Because of all the fights I got into with that violin. Every time I took the violin to school with me, I would be in a fight before I got home. So I learned how to throw rocks--then they didn't bully me. I had one friend in Oroville, Cy.

Were you aware of acoustic guitarists like Eddie Lang or Lonnie Johnson?

Eddie Lang, yeah. I wasn't aware of Lonnie Johnson. I'd heard of his name, but I wasn't aware of the things that he was doing. But I was aware of Eddie Lang--very much so. He was great. He did some great things, and it was funny--he played, but he wasn't aggressive like I wanted him to be.

He was more polite.

Yeah, really. I liked him. And I met him in person at the Fairmont Hotel. Louis Armstrong came to town also, and Louis and I were great pals, you know. I used to run with him all the time, and a lot of things would happen where I would have a little better insight into it than he did, and I could tell he wanted me around, you know. He was reading a radio script, and that's where I ran into Eddie Lang.

Did you see Eddie play?

No, no. I heard him, but I didn't see him play. I wanted to, but I didn't.

It's strange that he and Charlie both died so young.

Well, you can try to put a stamp on it, a reason they passed on, but you can't say for real.

During the '40s, what set San Francisco apart musically?

We had a lot of after-hour clubs over here, like Jumbo's Bop City, and that's where the San Francisco blues and jazz came from. You went in at one o'clock, and the music was just beginning to feel good. Peggy's Chicken Shack was right next to Jumbo's place, so there was good food--that was great. Jumbo was a great guy. We'd go there and jam the rest of the night, and that's where the jazz came from, mostly.

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What attracted you to blues?

I really wasn't attracted to blues music. I came from the radio. Jack's Tavern was the first night club I played.

Who were some of the first bluesmen in San Francisco?

That really played the blues? I didn't know of any, actually, because San Francisco mostly had a lot of dinner clubs. And in a dinner club, you didn't hardly play the blues. Seemed like the club owners in the Fillmore was trying to get away from the blues. They wanted class.

They wanted the white shirt and tie class?

Yeah! That started at Jack's. It was around the time of the war, because he had drapes over the door due to the blackout. We never saw the planes, but they were supposed to come over. The siren would go off to pull the curtain closed, and he'd have music behind the curtain and no one could see the lights. That's the way that was. Going due west from the town area, there was Harold Blackshear's Supper Club, Club Alabam, New Orleans Swing Club.

What do you remember about your first recording session in 1942?

The environment was very poor. One of the reasons was we did not have many places to record. We recorded at Sherman Clay, a music store at Kearny and Sutter in San Francisco.

Did they hold sessions in a room upstairs?

Yeah. A recording studio. As a matter of fact, that picture [*points to the cover of his Ace LP* The First King Of The Blues] was taken upstairs. That picture was taken at my first session. That's Sammy Deane and Johnnie Cooper and Eddie Taylor and myself.

Eddie Taylor was a fabulous sax player.

Yes, he was. Marvelous. We were together a long time. We were the best of friends. I went to Los Angeles and got him. He came from Dallas to Los Angeles, and I went down to Los Angeles to play. I had to go to the union and ask to have a tenor player. The first tenor I had was Bob Barfield, a great, great horn man and arranger. Didn't need a piano to arrange by. We'd just sit down and talk arrangements.

You'd do head arrangements together.

Yeah. Barfield left. He got homesick and he came home. I went to Los Angeles and found Eddie and brought him back to San Francisco with me, and we played for years together. Beautiful, beautiful man. He could play.

Did you teach him parts or did he instinctively know what to do?

He instinctively knew what to do.

Who did the horn arrangements at your session? Some of them are so tight.

Yes. We had charts. I wrote some of them, and Cedric Hayward wrote some. He could write real well. And we used to talk things out, because sometimes, you know, you talk out an arrangement, and you want it to go one way and you run into a block. So you have to back up and do it all over again. And that's how Cedric and I worked. Cedric was a piano player, could play very well. Texas boy. He helped with the arrangements. Barfield could also write, like that arrangement for "Why Was I Born" with a big band.

You have a terrific solo on "Why Was I Born.".

That was great. I thought it was a great arrangement.

Did you write "S.K. Blues" during your first session?

Yeah.

Now, your mom and dad were ministers, right?

Yes, they were.

In some ways, that's a pretty sexy song. Did they object to the lyrics?

No, no. [*Smiles.*] They didn't have any problems with it at all.

Is it true you wrote "S.K. Blues" on a challenge?

Yeah. After the session, the guys said, "We're going for a break to get something to eat." We were at the Sherman Clay, and we needed one more tune for the session. And [Dave] Rosenbaum asked me, "Can you bring another tune?" I said, "Yeah. Let me get something to eat." I was recording on Kearny and Sutter, and I left there and went out to the Fillmore District. While I was eating the food, I wrote the tune. And I had one verse too many for the tune.

You needed two three-minute sides?

Yes. I had about six minutes, so we filled in. And that's how "S.K. Blues" came about. I didn't even know it was gonna be a hit or anything when I wrote it. I came back and finished the session and I went home. Eddie Taylor came by and he told me, "Say, man, you know that tune might be a hit." I said, "Oh, man. What are you talking about?" "No kidding," he said. "That's a real down-home blues, and you might have a hit." Sure enough, later on we were in Texas, and when I got there it was a hit. Everybody was playing it in all those little clubs. Yeah, I was surprised.

You used that line "give me back the wig I bought you." Had you heard that before?

No, I'd never heard it before.

Did songs usually come to you in a quick flash of inspiration or did you labor over them?

They came in an inspiration.

Did songs ever come while you were sleeping or without an instrument?

Yeah. I like that. It happens quite often. The funny thing about it, when I wake up and get up, I sometimes lose it.

How was the band set up and miked at your 1942 Rhythm session?

Two mikes. One for me, and the other one would be off to the side, close to the piano setup. The horns were around the piano there. Sammy Deane was our trumpet player.

Did your mike pick up your voice and guitar amp?

Yes. I had the guitar across my lap, and the amplifier was down on the floor alongside me.

Did you distance other musicians from their mike according to the volume of their instruments so the horns would stand further back than the piano and the drums would be further back than the horns?

Exactly. That's right.

Was there a producer at the session?

Yeah, such as it was. I knew what I wanted to hear and how I wanted the setup, but the producers would never give it to me. The only time I got a good producer was on that "Why Was I Born," and that was a large band.

Same label, though.

Yes.

Do you remember the guitar and amp you used for the 1942 session?

I was using Gibson then.

That was an expensive guitar.

Yeah, it was expensive.

Yours was fancier than Charlie Christian's.

Yes. Charlie was using the one bar [pickup] on his, and so was I.

Did you play at a low volume?

Yes, that's how I got the sound. That was the sound.

You'd turn down the volume while comping and then turn it up when you soloed?

Yeah, that's right. Turn it down, turn it up.

Did you always use a pick?

No, no. I was experimenting all the time. I went up to Chicago, and the musicians were waiting for me. So instead of using a regular pick, I used a felt pick and turned the volume up. I always used a new felt pick that was stiff and turned the volume up. That would get a good sound.

SAUNDERS KING, Guitar;
SAMMY DEANE, Trumpet;
EDDIE TAYLOR, Tenor Sax;
JOHNNY COOPER, Piano;
JOE HOLDER, Bass;
BUNNY PETERS, Drums.

What was it like when you switched over to the Modern label? Did they have a better budget, better studio?

They had a better budget--I'm sure of that. They had a marvelous big studio in Hollywood.

Do you recall cutting "Empty Bedroom Blues"?

Yeah. We did that session in my apartment and took the cut to the studio and did it over again.

Your Aladdin 78s like "St. James Infirmary Blues," "Little Girl," and "Misery Blues" had a fine sound.

They were done in a new studio with excellent acoustics and good technicians--a good session

At this session you started bending guitar strings.

I think that's an association with someone else. Most of the blues players were bending strings.

The younger guys like B.B. King?

Yeah. They were bending strings and notes. And I could do it, but I didn't because I didn't want to at that time. And when I came home, I found out that some other musicians had moved in my spot. In other words, they got there by bending notes. Texas boys, Louisiana boys were bending notes. So I started. Tried that. I didn't care for it. It was a means to an end.

Were people bending before the war?

Not that much.

Charlie Christian didn't.

No Charlie didn't have time. That's what I'm talking about: He didn't have time to bend. He gotta move!

What were sessions with the Bihari brothers like?

Nice. Joe was really nice. As far as the money was concerned, he was beautiful. He was great, anything I wanted. The only thing I didn't like about him was he wanted to compare me to B.B. King. He gave me a bunch of records and wanted me to listen to them and simulate them. But that wasn't my gig at all.

That's not who you were.

That's where we fell out.

In terms of vocal performance, do you have a favorite of your own records?

Yeah. I have one or two. One is "Sometime I Feel Like A Motherless Child." I recorded it, but they didn't put it out.

Was that with Decca?

Yeah. In the '40s.

Any other vocal favorites besides "Sometimes I Feel"?

[*Pauses.*] "Summertime."

Did you enjoy recording "Silver Threads" with Carlos Santana?

Oh, yeah.

After "S.K.'s Blues," what were your most popular records?

"I've Had My Moments" and "Why Was I Born."

Do you have a collection of your own 78s?

No.

During your career, did any musicians give you good advice or look out for you?

I'd look out for myself, and I'd look out for other musicians.

What would you encourage a younger musician to learn from you?

I'd like for them to learn music.

Thanks for the interview.

Beautiful. Beautiful.

Jas Obrecht thanks B.B. King, Jo and Kitsaun King, and Debbie and Carlos Santana for their gracious assistance with this article.

A LOOK AT EVAN WILLIAMS

BY BRYAN SALE

In 1917, tenor Evan Williams was asked about what he typically experienced just before a recording session. "My very soul is racked with abject fear," he replied. "I can't tell you why--I just know it's so, and the fact you can sing it over again doesn't seem to help. It's a terrific strain on the nerves, infinitely more than I feel in the presence of the biggest audience of living people. I don't see anything nor feel anything. I'm trying to put all there is of Evan Williams into that horn, and it takes the tuck out of me somehow."

This comment helps explain the high quality of his many fine Victor recordings. Such candor also gives a rare insight into the mind set of a singer who was possibly the most famous American tenor making records in the first two decades of this century. However, he experienced many disappointments and setbacks as he rose to fame. The most detailed account of these early years--and of Williams' career as a whole--is found in Gareth H. Lewis' excellent article on Evan Williams in the December 1978 issue of The Record Collector, which I consulted often in writing this article. James Francis Cooke's 1921 book Great Singers On The Art of Singing, which includes an article by Williams titled "How I Regained A Lost Voice," also proved invaluable.

Harry Evan Williams was born on September 7, 1867 in Mineral Ridge, Ohio. His parents had immigrated to America from Wales and his father was a miner in the north-eastern Ohio area. When Harry was ten, his mother died and the boy was sent to live with an aunt and uncle. His vocal abilities were apparent when he was young. Years later he claimed his first public appearance as a singer took place when, around the age of 12, he sang in competition with his brother at a Mineral Ridge country store, with an apple barrel serving as a stage.

Williams was sent to attend school in Akron but at age 14 he left to work in a coal mine. Although the press later made much of his limited opportunities as a miner's son, Williams himself set the record straight in an interview: "It isn't true that my boyhood days in the coal mines were weighed down by poverty. I was rich then. I was a big strong fellow and I got a man's wages and had as many good times and took as many buggy rides as anyone in East Akron."

In his teen years he sang with an octet club. A local attorney attended a recital, recognized the young tenor's potential, and helped Williams become a professional singer. Williams had thought about a singing career but was reluctant to leave the security of the mines. Finally he moved to Cleveland and studied with Louise von Fielitsch (or Fielitsen, according to Cooke).

After about four years of study, Williams went to New York to study voice with the financial backing of Ohio friends. Soon funds ran out and he recalled in an interview walking down 23rd Street with no money. Before he left Ohio, a female admirer gave him a coin sealed in tissue paper and had instructed him not to open it until he was out of money. Gareth Lewis reports, "Hopefully he broke open the packet and found not the expected substantial gold coin, but a single fifty cent piece!" On an elevated train, he was seated near two men discussing church music and the tenor overheard them mention that All Angels Church would hold auditions for the tenor soloist post. Williams auditioned, as did fifteen others. His rendition of "If With All Your Hearts" from Mendelssohn's Elijah won him the job.

Evan Williams' official debut as a concert singer took place at the Worcester Festival held in Worcester, Massachusetts in 1896. He was warmly received at the festival, as evident by offers for engagement. By the turn of the century he was a well-known tenor but at this time he began to

suffer vocal problems, possibly caused by overuse of his voice in what was a very competitive field.

These vocal troubles came to a head during a 1902 performance of Elijah. His voice failed completely, and it was reported at the time that after the performance Williams in tears threw his score across the stage and vowed never to sing in public again. He retired to a farm in Ohio he had purchased and became a singing teacher. His name was well-established, so he had no trouble finding students. Lewis reports that at one point Williams gave as many as 200 lessons a month.

Williams blamed much of his troubles on the artificial singing methods imposed on him by his teachers. He stated in an article written for The Druid many years later, "I left Akron with as fine a natural production as any man ever carried to a teacher...after working six or seven years with teachers, I was 'all in.'" When asked late in his career what advice he had for young singers, Williams replied, "Beware of teachers with a special method. Listen to great artists and get acquainted with a good musician."

After a year or so of teaching, Williams felt his vocal powers returning. He visited vocal experts and found one who gave the advice needed: "Williams, go back to nature, and listen and work, and above all have patience, for your voice will only return by carefully taking care of it day by day, and year after year."

Williams gradually developed a new technique for vocal production, often working many hours alone in the fields of his farm. By late 1903 he was ready to resume his career as a tenor but was uncomfortable at the thought of re-entering the field in an America that had witnessed his decline, so he traveled to England, where he was unknown. He called England "the home of tenors and oratorio."

His visit was evidently successful since he stayed until late 1904 and returned to England again in 1906 for more performances. The most important of these was in February 1906 when Williams recorded for the Gramophone and Typewriter Company.

Returning to the U.S. in the summer of 1906, Williams had many singing engagements lined up. The one that started his second singing career in America was ironically the Worcester Festival of 1906, exactly ten years after his debut. He became a favorite of the festival and made another fifteen appearances over subsequent years.

On October 9, 1906, Evan Williams began a long recording career with the Victor Talking Machine Company, starting with Chauncey Olcott's "My Wild Irish Rose" (B-3866-1). It is through the many fine Victor recordings that U.S. collectors know Williams today. He was not exclusively a Victor artist although his Victor discs are easiest to find. William R. Moran states in the December 1978 issue of The Record Collector, "All told, Williams had cut about 121 waxes for The Gramophone Co. in England, of which 54 were given catalogue numbers, so were presumably released....[P]robably during this last period in England, Williams gave Pathé a try to see if his problem was with the recording methods of His Master's Voice/Victor. If the Pathé cylinder numbers were continuous, they suggest that perhaps twenty titles might have been made . . . of which six were issued?"

The "problem" alluded to here was Williams' need for multiple takes. Cooke's Great Singers On The Art of Singing includes a piece in which Williams reports, "[S]eldom could I make a record at the very first attempt that was up to the very high standard maintained by the company."

The earliest Victor issues were released on the black label under the pseudonym William T. Evans. Julian Morton Moses states in Collectors' Guide to American Recordings that the supplements announcing the release of these discs included a photograph not of Williams! The Fagan and Moran Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings reports that some black label discs were issued under the pseudonym Harry Evans, but the only one I know about is Victor #5643, "The Song That Reached My Heart." Williams recorded this again under his own name during his final recording session (Red Seal #74571).

Of the William T. Evans records, I have only heard the disc of Ernest Ball's "Love Me and the World is Mine" (B-4866-2), recorded on October 8, 1907. Williams recorded other titles during this session and all were issued on Red Seal except for Ball's popular ballad, which Victor executives evidently considered inappropriate material for Red Seal status but was nonetheless suited to Williams' talents.

Victor's 1921 catalog helps us understand the incredible range of music Williams covered: "The list of records below is fairly representative of the man. Great masterpieces of oratorio and opera are found side by side with the tender folk songs of the land of his Welsh ancestors, and with these are found the popular better-class ballads of our own day. Williams played upon his audiences with the touch of a master, stirring them with his fire, lulling them with his exquisite tenderness, and this mystical magnetic power is translated through his records so that it is preserved forever."

Many acquainted with Evan Williams' recordings would not regard Victor's statement as hyperbole. Consider one of his most common records, the Easter hymn "Open The Gates of the Temple." Here is a fine example of the "fire" mentioned above. Williams takes a high C with amazing force and assurance. In an earlier issue of Victrola And 78 Journal, Charles Arnhold singled out Williams' "If With All Your Hearts," a recording that indeed conveys the conviction and sincerity Williams could project.

I feel one of Evan Williams' most powerful recordings is "How Many Hired Servants," from Sir Arthur Sullivan's The Prodigal Son. In the 1917 interview cited early in this article, Williams mentions this piece: "About eight years ago I had just returned from England and stopped here to see Mr. [Calvin] Child. I was tired and actually longing for home but he wanted me to make some records for the English trade. I sang 'How Many Hired Servants' from The Prodigal Son. Because I myself was so eager to be home I got a sense of longing into that record that I have never since been able to get." While the domestic issue of this piece is actually a later take, it is a spellbinding performance. It is included on a Symposium set titled Sir Arthur Sullivan: Sesquicentennial Commemorative Issue (#1123). His art should be better represented on compact disc.

Williams recorded many titles at Victor's Camden studios that were for the English market and were not released in the U.S. He was popular on both sides of the Atlantic and gave over a thousand concert performances. He toured the South with Victor Herbert's Orchestra and was among the first performers to use a car to travel from concert to concert. High public demand for his singing meant a very heavy singing schedule.

During this Victor period, Williams was one of a handful of singers issued on Red Seal and black label discs. He was not known for performing in opera houses yet he was the tenor Victor relied on in these years for recording in English popular tenor opera arias. Singing translated texts that are poetic and reasonably accurate, he recorded items from the Italian repertoire ("They Hands Are Frozen" from La Boheme), the German ("In Distant Land" from Lohengrin), and the French ("Oh Paradise" from Africana).

Williams was not given partners for Victor sessions though an exception listed in Fagan and Moran's Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings is a rare recording made on July 23, 1907 of Huhn's "Excelsior" (C-4696-1), his partner being the Welsh-American baritone Gwilyum Miles (Columbia gives the first name as "Gwilym"). Fagan and Moran note that the two singers were distant cousins. On some Victor recordings Williams is accompanied by a chorus that included such Victor regulars as Lucy Isabelle Marsh, Reinald Werrenrath, and Harry Macdonough. Williams recorded several duets for HMV with baritone Robert Radford.

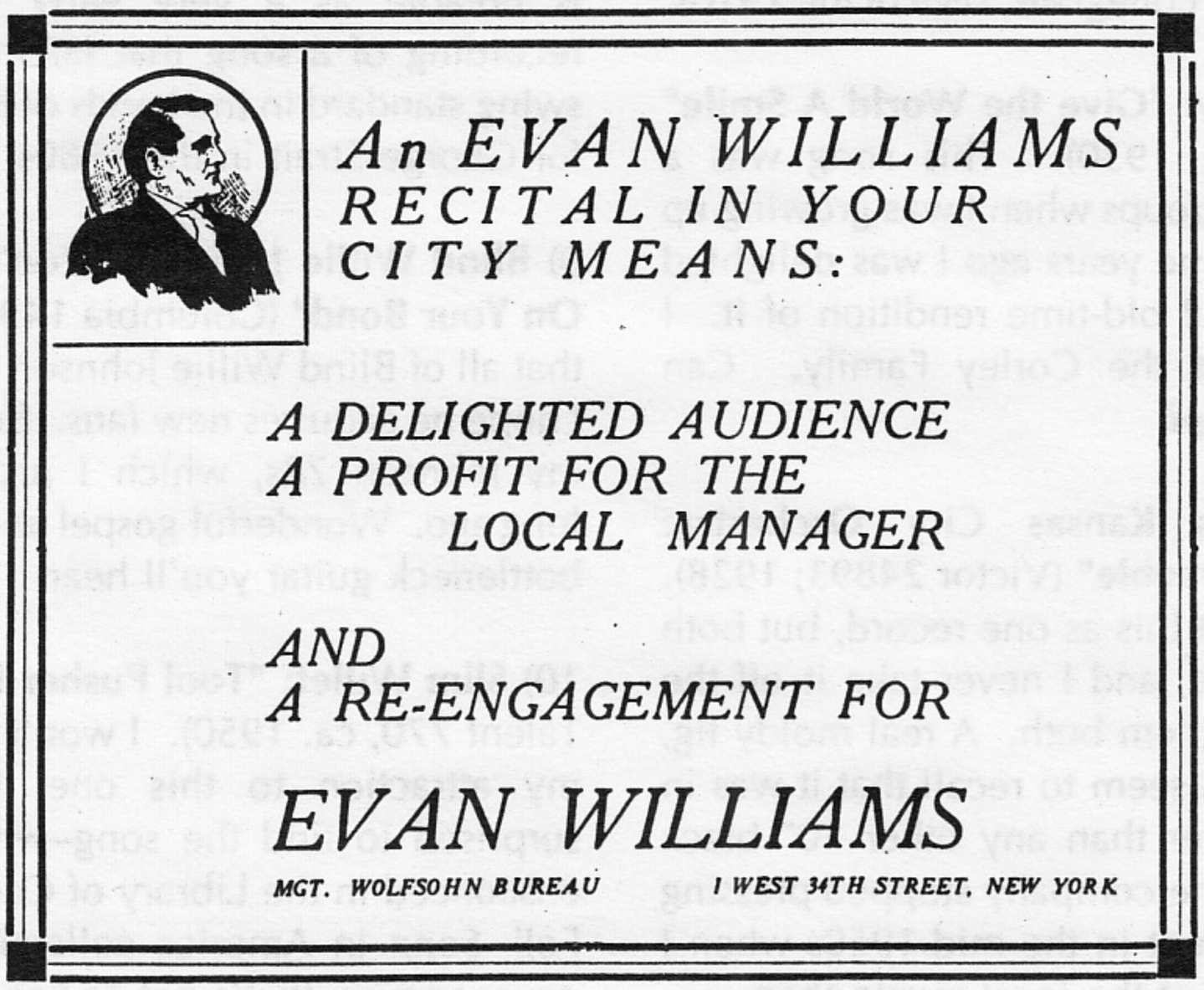
Increasing demands for Williams in personal appearances and recordings led to vocal strain, again apparent by 1916. The strain was noted (with varying degrees of tact) in reviews of the time, but Williams remained as popular as ever with the public and he sang to full houses. Upon America's entry into Europe's conflict, Williams--like other stars of the day--threw himself full force

into the war effort. He devoted himself completely to concert-giving for troops, with "Tim Rooney's At The Fightin'" and "When The Boys Come Home" becoming favorites.

In early 1918, as Williams toured New England and Colorado, he developed a carbuncle on his neck that did not respond to treatments. His last public performance was at the Armory in Akron, Ohio on May 18, 1918. He suffered great pain during this performance but believed he would benefit from a few weeks of rest at home before an upcoming appearance at a Cincinnati festival. Sadly, two days later he was taken to Akron City Hospital, a victim of blood poisoning. On May 24, 1918, Evan Williams died. It is prophetic that among Williams' very last recordings was Tosti's "Good Bye."

As Gareth Lewis points out, Williams was very much a singer of his time. His recording career began when most of the finest vocalists then recording were European. Americans were eager for their compatriots to match and surpass the high standards of famous European singers, so native audiences were proud of Williams and other successful American singers of this era, such as Lillian Nordica, Louise Homer, and Emma Eames.

I loved 78s as a child and used to refer to them as "attic records" since that is where they seemed to come from. In my teens and twenties I lost interest in 78s, preferring contemporary styles of music, but in my early thirties I again became interested in 78s from the early decades of this century. When I first heard an Evan Williams disc in 1989, the impact was immediate and powerful. The beauty and tenderness of the voice affected me as they must have affected record buyers when the discs were new. No other singer has touched me so deeply. The experience is best summed up by a reporter's comment at the end of the 1917 interview, during which Evan Williams had sung a few phrases to demonstrate a musical point: "Once he sang a most wonderful pianissimo that went away up somewhere among the harmonics and with even gradations shaded off into infinity, like the shadow of a whisper."



Ten 78s I Play A Lot -- *By Nolan Porterfield*

Time permitting, I play all of my 78s regularly, and since my collection stays fairly small (up and down from about 3,000), I usually get through all of them once or twice a year. But of course there are distinctions to be made, and here are ten that somehow seem to rise to the surface with considerable frequency. They are listed in no particular order.

1) **Jelly Roll Morton's Red Hot Peppers: "The Pearls"** (Victor 20948; 1927). Some Morton purists prefer his solo recordings of "The Pearls," but I like the band version. This is one of the classiest jazz numbers I know. Listen for the stop-time early on, with Johnny Dodds' clarinet twining through Stump Evans' alto, and the whole thing anchored and driven by Quinn Wilson's tuba. Downright elegant.

2) **Frank Farrell and His Greenwich Village Inn Orchestra: "Fair Co-Ed"** (Diva 2542; 1927). Frivolous and corny, but it's got a peppy beat, a hot trumpet, and catchy lyrics ("Fair Co-ed . . . although you vamp us on campus . . . you're our Alpha Beta Pi, you're the apple of our eye") that perfectly capture the "collegiate" rage of the 1920s.

3) **The Corley Family: "Give the World A Smile"** (Columbia 15574-D; 1930). This song was a favorite with gospel groups when I was growing up in the 1950s, and some years ago I was delighted to find this wonderful old-time rendition of it. I know nothing about the Corley Family. Can anyone out there help?

4) **Bennie Moten's Kansas City Orchestra: "South"/"She's No Trouble"** (Victor 24893; 1928). I'm cheating to count this as one record, but both sides are equally fine, and I never take it off the shelf without playing 'em both. A real moldy fig, and very common. I seem to recall that it was in Victor's catalog longer than any other 10" black label, perhaps until the company stopped pressing 78s. It was still current in the mid-1950s when I bought my first copy at the local music shop.

5) **John McCormack: "Then You'll Remember Me"** (Victor 64599; 1916). Is there anyone who doesn't like John McCormack?

6) **Jimmie Rodgers: "Tuck Away My Lonesome Blues"** (Victor 22220; 1929). This is not necessarily my favorite Rodgers side, but it's all too frequently overlooked when his standards are discussed. Whistling is by Bob MacGimsey--who was, believe it or not, the National Champion Whistler--and there's also Joe Kaipo's lilting steel ("Hawaiian") guitar. Great 1920s "feel."

7) **Teddy Hill and His N.B.C. Orchestra: "I'm Feeling Like a Million"** (Bluebird 7013; 1937). I paid a dime for a new copy of this in 1953 and have gone through several copies since. Another classy recording (and I'm tempted to list the flip side also; it's great, too). Listen closely for early Dizzy Gillespie.

8) **Peggy English: "Right or Wrong"** (Brunswick 3949; 1928). Peggy English seems to have left less of a discographical trail than even Jane Green, but in addition to being a fine performance, this item is notable as a very early (maybe the first?) recording of a song that later became a western swing standard in the hands of Bob Wills--and a hit for George Strait in the 1980s.

9) **Blind Willie Johnson: "You'll Need Somebody On Your Bond"** (Columbia 14504-D; 1929). Now that all of Blind Willie Johnson is available on CD, I hope he acquires new fans. But I'm still partial to my Johnson 78s, which I just happened across long ago. Wonderful gospel and some of the finest bottleneck guitar you'll hear.

10) **Slim Willet: "Tool Pusher from Snyder"** (Star-Talent 770, ca. 1950). I won't even try to explain my attraction to this one, but I was mildly surprised to find the song--which Willet wrote--ensconced in the Library of Congress's prestigious Folk Song in America collection (but, alas, in a cover version that's not as good as Willet's).

MY TEN FAVORITE "ELECTRIC" 78s

BY MARK MITCHELL

1) **Nat Shilkret: "That's My Weakness Now"/"You're Wonderful"** (Victor 21497; 1928). Two very spirited dance numbers expertly arranged, as one would expect from Shilkret's Victor Orchestra. The first number is my favorite song from 1928. The cornet work in the final third of the disc is inspiring. Tension builds from the beginning, and the song ends with traps. I prefer Shilkret's performance of this tune over Whiteman's, as good as it is. This record is perfect when played on the Credenza.

2) **Guy Lombardo and His Royal Canadians: "Baby"/"Please Let Me Dream In Your Arms"** (Columbia 1721-D; 1928). Two cheerful tunes with nice vocals by Carmen Lombardo. "Baby" has great guitar passages.

3) **Tom Waring: "After I Say I'm Sorry"/"In The Middle Of The Night"** (Victor 20004; 1926). I close my eyes and imagine I'm in a night club. This early electric must have struck 1926 listeners as a revelation. On "After I Say I'm Sorry," Waring is accompanied by piano, with counterpoint provided by cornet. The opening is very well done, with Waring holding the final note of the verse as the piano makes several harmonic progressions, matching the dynamic level of Waring's voice at the phrase's end. "In The Middle Of The Night" is a sentimental tune for voice and piano.

4) **Eddie Lang and Boyd Senter: "New St. Louis Blues"** (Okeh 40755). Here we have very interesting guitar and clarinet playing--inventive, electrifying, unusual. I like the growls produced from the clarinet. I wouldn't mind having Guy Lombardo's version of this song.

5) **Roger Wolfe Kahn: "Imagination"/"Crazy Rhythm"** (Victor 21368; 1928). Two great tunes nicely arranged--spirited renditions, lots of fizz and froth. Another great record for the Credenza. Vocals are by Franklyn Baur.

6) **The High Hatters: "Right Out of Heaven"** (Victor 21727; 1928). A well done sentimental tune with a nice rhythmic swing and a fine Lewis James vocal.

7) **Jack Albin and His Hotel Pennsylvania Dance Orchestra: "You Didn't Have To Tell Me"** (Sterling 293006). An enjoyable tune arranged for dancing and featuring a fine vocal trio.

8) **Marie Burke: "I'd Rather Be Blue Over You"/"When I Only Think Of You"** (Columbia 5533, UK). Burke has a pleasing voice, and I especially like the guitar work on these sides.

9) **Paul Whiteman: "By The Sycamore Tree"** (Victor 22879; 1931). A lovely, dreamy tune with a nice Jack Fulton vocal. Top notch arrangement.

10) **Ben Selvin: "My Sin"** (Columbia 1800-D; 1929). Breezy rendition and nice vocal. It ends with the use of traps, an effect I always appreciate.

MARK LIVES IN TORONTO, CANADA.

MY TEN FAVORITE VERNON DALHART 78s--AT THIS MOMENT

By Jack Palmer

Since I collect only Vernon Dalhart 78 RPM recordings, my ten favorite 78s are naturally Dalhart recordings. As with most of us, my tastes change from time to time. These are my 10 favorite Dalhart recordings at this moment.

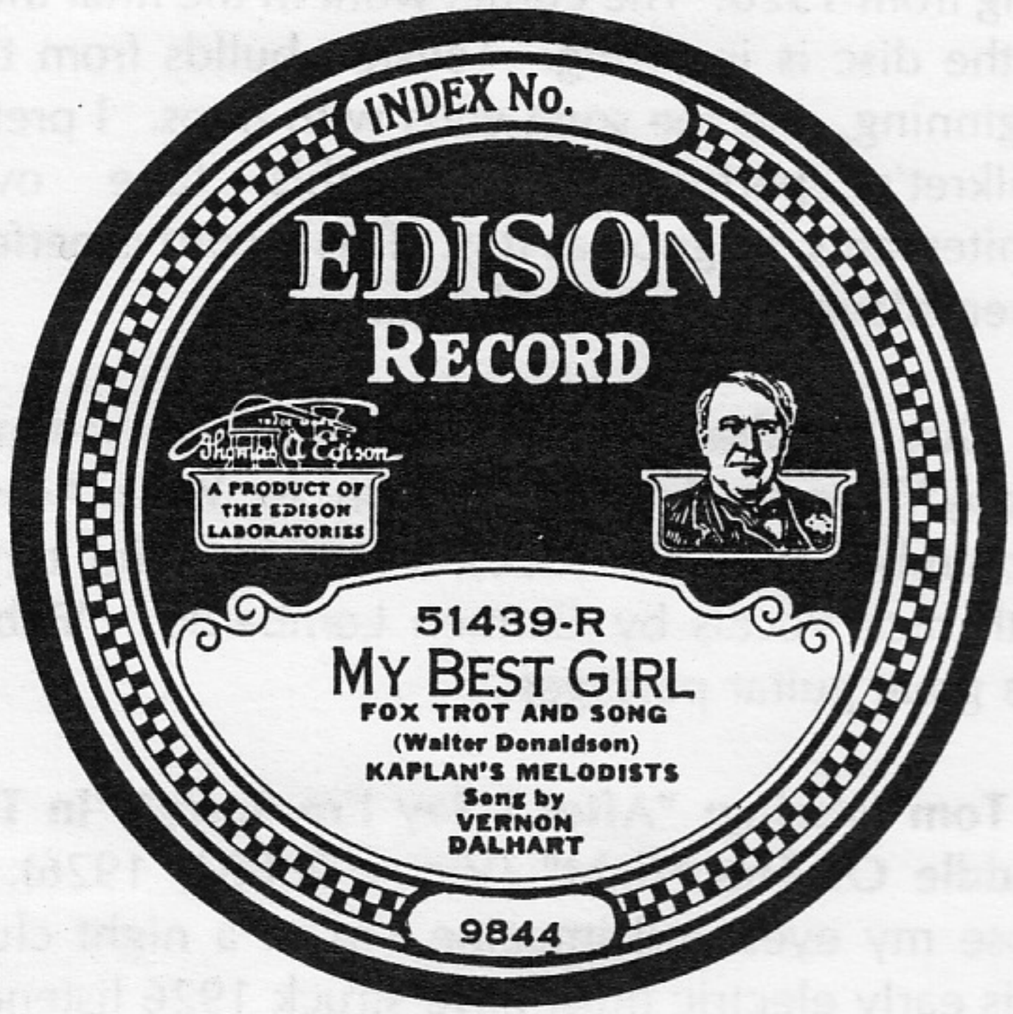
1) **"THE PRISONER'S SONG"** (Victor 19427; also later released on Bluebird B-10578). This was the most famous Dalhart recording and one of the best. Because the instrumentation here is only guitar and a viola, Dalhart's voice dominates. First recorded acoustically and later re-recorded electrically and released under the same catalog number, the song sounds good in either version. I have heard a dozen other recordings of this ballad but this one is best. I'm not sure if I enjoy the song for itself or because my mother sang it to me when I was a child!

2) **"CAN'T YOU HEAR ME CALLING, CAROLINE?"** (Edison 80334; also on Edison Blue Amberol). This was Dalhart's first recording for Edison. It was released in 1917 and remained in the catalog until Edison called it quits. Some people consider this the best recording Dalhart ever did, and I'm not sure I can disagree.

3) **"GUY MASSEY'S FAREWELL"** (Columbia 15066-D). This Dalhart penned (?) ballad about the death of his cousin Guy Massey, supposedly the composer of "The Prisoner's Song," is a 1920s tear jerker. Dalhart identifies himself as the brother of Guy, not his cousin. I enjoy identifying words and phrases within the song that allude to "The Prisoner's Song."

4) **"THE LETTER EDGED IN BLACK"** (Victor 19837). Another popular (and sad) Dalhart song recorded for many companies. A son receives a letter announcing his mother's death. This was also a song which my mother used to sing, so perhaps I still love it for sentimental reasons!

5) **"I'M SATISFIED WITH YOU"** (Perfect 12266). Appropriate to any era, this song states approval of the 1920's girl, claiming she is just as good and true as the older generation that criticized her.



When Peter Fraser visited the Edison National Historic Site last spring, he was permitted to xerox some letters on file, including the following dated January 9, 1925. It was written by Vernon Dalhart to Edison executive Arthur L. Walsh, manager of the Advertising and Music Department: ***"Enclosed you will find an interesting little letter*** *[from a boy who admired Dalhart's version of "The Prisoner Song" on Victor]...****You know, it's wonderful to be popular. I wrote the boy that I had recorded this number for Edison and no doubt it would soon be on sale. In all seriousness, 'The Prisoner's Song' has been a big seller for Victor. I have received numerous letters thru' Camden from even Jewish N.Y. dealers about this number. I can't even guess what it's all about. However, I wish you would shoot it out...As ever, Dal."*** *Dalhart's stationary shows his address at the time as 112 Halstead Avenue, Mamaroneck, New York.*

6) **"LAVENDER COWBOY"** (Bluebird B-8229). This song was one of six Dalhart recorded at his final session in 1939. In this session Dalhart recorded with a country band--a first and only time. Some people feel the band buried Dalhart's vocals, citing that as the reason these were never successful, but I feel Dalhart's voice comes through well and I enjoy these. "Lavender Cowboy" was later covered by Burl Ives, but in 1939 the song was considered "blue" and was banned from radio. This effectively killed sales of the record.

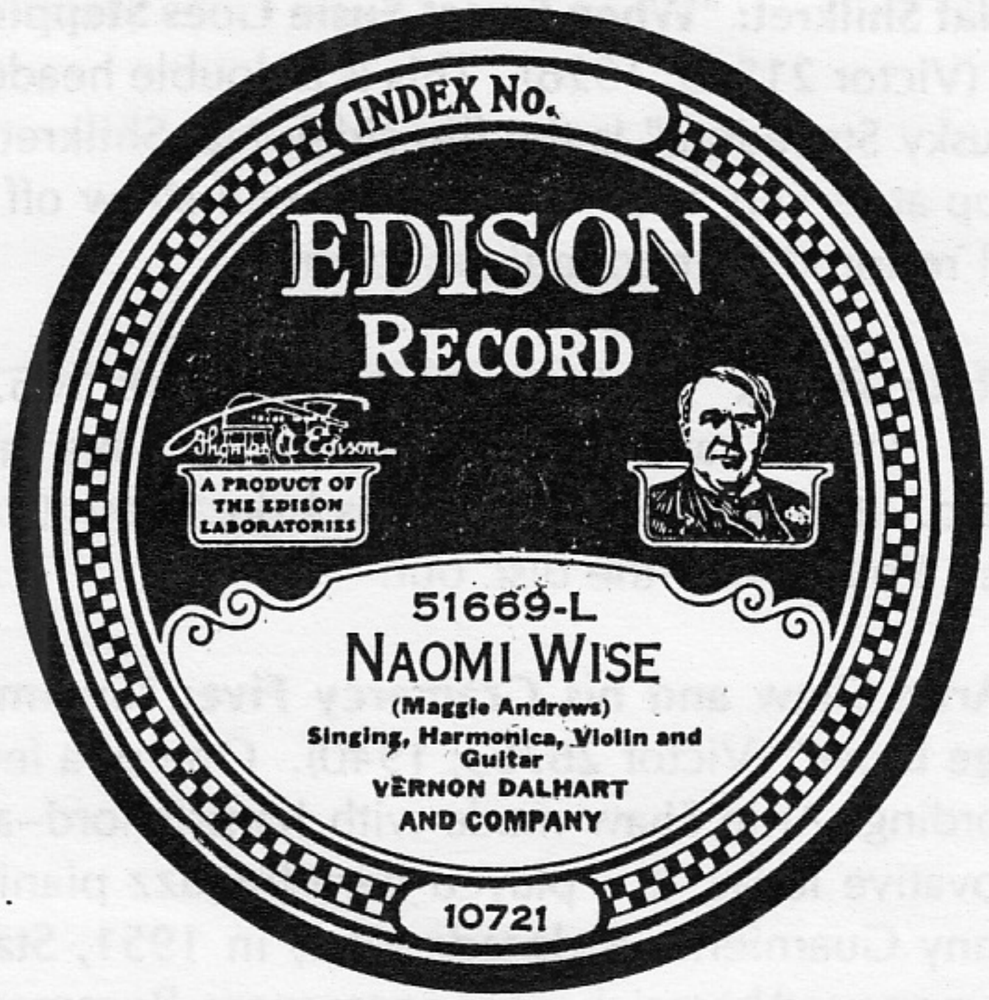
7) **"A WARNING TO THE BOYS"/"A WARNING TO THE GIRLS"** (Harmony 729-H). Dalhart here uses the name Mack Allen. These two humorous songs originally written for a stage act are done well by Dalhart. They include a short singing intro, then a long recitation. For those who like 1920s humor, both sides have some funny spots, and I still get a smile when I play them.

8) **"PUTTING ON THE STYLE"/"LITTLE BLACK MUSTACHE"** (Victor 19919). "Putting On the Style" is about boys and girls trying to impress peers and elders with their clothes and actions. It still goes on in today's world, just with different clothes and actions. "Little Black Mustache" tells of a girl who loved a man with a little black mustache. Sadly, the man married an older woman because of her gold. As usual, Dalhart sings every line clearly, so you don't miss a word.

9) **"THE BULLY OF THE TOWN, PARTS 1 AND 2"** (Columbia 15302-D). The infectious rhythm and Dalhart's harmonica playing would make this a great instrumental. There is nothing wrong with Dalhart's singing here, but the lyrics of this song earlier associated with "coon-shouter" May Irwin are definitely not politically correct, and they almost embarrass me to listen to them. There is also one mistake in the recording, which I always wait for each time I play it. But the melody is great and I catch myself whistling it often. This is also on the Harmony label with the pseudonym Mack Allen.

10) **"ZEB TURNEY'S GAL"** (Victor 19867). An earlier version of the song "The Hatfields and The Coys," this song has a nice beat and melody, and I play it often. Dalhart sings the humorous lyrics in a happy, light-hearted manner.

Jack Palmer lives in Battle Creek, Michigan. He travels sometimes to Jefferson, Texas, where Dalhart was born in 1883, for the annual "Dalhart Days." Jefferson is near the towns of Vernon and Dalhart--the basis for Marion Try Slaughter's stage name.



Here is another letter of this period from Dalhart to Walsh: ***"I understand you are writing a comedy song, something about porcupines and woodchucks. Is it a novelty? I am doing a lot of novelties...Do you contemplate giving it to a publisher? Hesitate if you are. I might be able to make a publisher behave on the number, or do it for about 5 or 6 companies and get a straight one cent royalty on it. I may be stepping a little fast in writing you about this song, but I am looking for numbers of the novelty type, and Lou Schlesinger told me about yours. If it's funny, keep it off the radio if you expect to cash in on it."***

MY TEN MOST PLAYED RECORDS

BY BARRY CHESLOCK

1) **Mayflower Serenaders: "Valencia"** (Perfect 14625; 1926). I have 17 recordings of "Valencia," and this is one of my two acoustic versions. It really gets your toes tapping. Irving Kaufman sings a verse to top it off. The Mayflower Serenaders here is really the Bar Harbor Society Orchestra.

2) **Ray Noble: "Sailin' On The Robert E. Lee"** (Victor 24128; 1933). This was made before Ray Noble settled in the U.S. It's also a toe-tapper and has great percussive imitations of a steam boat.

3) **Nat Shilkret: "When Sweet Susie Goes Steppin' By"** (Victor 21515; 1928). This is a double header ("Dusky Stevedore" is the flip side)--Nat Shilkret's group at its very best. This record will show off a well restored Orthophonic machine.

4) **Ruth Etting: "At Sundown"** (Columbia 1052; 1927). Words can't describe how much I like this record. If you like it as much as I do, copy it on tape! You'll wear the disc out!

5) **Artie Shaw and his Gramercy Five: "Summit Ridge Drive"** (Victor 26763; 1940). One of a few recordings Artie Shaw made with harpsichord--an innovative idea. It is played here by jazz pianist Johnny Guarnieri. A decade later, in 1951, Stan Freeman used harpsichord to accompany Rosemary Clooney on "Come On-A My House."

6) **Alberta Hunter with Fats Waller at the organ: "Sugar"** (Victor 20771; 1927). Great combination! It's been said that Thomas Waller preferred organ to piano--and that Waller got his nickname when this was made. During his organ solo between verses, Alberta says, "Play that thing, Fats!"

7) **Victor Herbert's Orchestra: "The Waltzing Doll"** (Victor Blue Label 45170; 1920). This was the first record I heard as an infant and it has stuck with me all my life. I have a copy on my Victor VIII all the time. Two takes of this piece were released under the same catalogue number.

8) **Betove: "Follies Musicales"** (Decca G-20478). This disc also goes back to my childhood. I called it "the funny record." Betove is a French comic who imitates six different languages while singing, but he never uses actual words. It is as funny today as when it was issued 60 years ago. This is also on the Odeon and Parlophone labels.

9) **Jascha Heifetz and the London Philharmonic: "Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso" by Saint-Saens** (Victor 14115; c. 1938). I view this as the definitive recording of this work. Heifetz plays it briskly and keeps your attention throughout the piece. He performed this in a movie from the late 1930s called They Shall Have Music.

10) **Paul Whiteman: "Lonely Melody"** (Victor 21214; 1928). Just a good dance tune from the '20s with some good cornet solos by Bix.

BARRY LIVES IN ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA.

Barry singles out this January 4, 1928 performance for being "a good dance tune." The above bootleg from 1949 cites "Bix & Bing," but Bing was not at this session. Jimmy Dorsey and Frankie Trumbauer were. Steve Brown's string bass is noteworthy, as is Bill Challis' arrangement.

MY TEN MOST PLAYED RECORDS

BY JERRY DONNELL

1) **Enrico Caruso: "Vecchia zimarra" from La Bohéme** (1916). Yes, Caruso could and did sing bass to perfection!

2) **Cotton Pickers Orchestra: "Just Blues"** (Madison 1649; 1929). I have worn out four copies of this and can't find more. It is rare to hear blues like this! This is a Grey Gull studio band.

3) **Bessie Smith: "Boweavil Blues"** (Columbia 14018-D; 1924). Anybody who ever had to sit on a curbstone knows too!

4) **Dave Macon: "(She Was Always) Chewing Gum"** (Vocalion 14847; 1924). He was a cousin of ours. I knew him well.

5) **Ma Rainey: "Bo-weavil Blues"** (Paramount 12080). As good as Bessie's version. I like all Rainey's Paramounts, which are very hard to find, and you have to really concentrate to appreciate the music, given the sound quality of these Paramounts. Poor dear, she was never happy.

6) **Carter Family: "Poor Orphan Child"** (Victor 20877; 1927). My sister's daughter married Maybelle's grandson, David. Maybelle never said anything bad about anybody. That woman knew no evil! But that's Sarah doing the vocal.

7) **Albert Janpolski: Onegin's Aria from Eugen Onegin** (Victor 31463; 1905). Who said Victor couldn't put out great sound in 1905? You think Caruso is great? Just listen to this baritone!

8) **Kate Smith: "Chant of the Jungle"** (Harmony 1069-H; 1929). That woman was a saint! She had a radio show and phoned me in 1944 when I was very sick in a hospital. She played this record over the radio after my aunt made a special request.

9) **Memphis Minnie: "Bumble Bee"** (Columbia 14542-D; 1929). Our washerwoman introduced me to Memphis Minnie's records in 1934. Memphis Minnie could belt it out while picking the box like wow! I've worn three copies out.

10) **Donna Summer: "Hot Stuff."** This is not on 78, but I play it as much as my old records! It is from 1979, and I've worn out two copies. I admit it's a little hard on an old man's heart!

"The Old Maid's Last Hope" was written by Uncle Dave Macon about a woman in Murfreesboro that Jerry Donnell also knew--Miss Dolly.

MY MOST PLAYED ELECTRIC DIAMOND DISCS

BY DOUG OLDS

1) **Winegar's Pennsylvania Boys: "Ida! Sweet As Apple Cider"** (52321). Wonderful mix of swanky, jazzy stuff! I could listen to this one hundreds of times and never tire of it. I close my eyes and picture the "Boys" playing.

2) **Piccadilly Players: "Think of Me Thinking Of You"** (52442). Typical of this band's snappy, peppy releases. The vocal is by Jack Parker, who seems wrong for this tune, but the bands fills all the other grooves with toe-tappin' fun.

3) **B.A. Rolfe And His Palais D'Or Orchestra: "When Sweet Susie Goes Steppin' By"** (52326). One of many jazzy sides by this group. I find myself reaching for it again and again.

4) **B.A. Rolfe And His Lucky Strike Dance Orchestra: "Birmingham Bertha"** (52604). Vaughn De Leath was ideal for this number's vocal. It's one of her seductive, "flapperish" performances--bluesy, kinda mellow, all around fun.

5) **B.A. Rolfe And His Orchestra: "Makin' Whoopee!"** (52474). Well-recorded, it gets my feet going right off the bat. The very robust vocal is by Jack Parker.

6) **Winegar's Pennsylvania Boys: "Stay Out Of The South"** (52224). I enjoy this--along with the Boys item I listed above--more than the much sought after "My Gal Sal," which I have but rarely play.

7) **Piccadilly Players: "That's What I Call Keen"** (52273). Put on your dance reproducer and don't sit too close to the grill of your Edison machine! Another great dance tune with outstanding vocals.

8) **Ermine Calloway: "Is There Anything Wrong In That?"** (52519). That itty-bitty voice gets me every time. I have all of her Diamond Discs and rate the others almost as high as this.

9) **Jack Dalton and The 7 Blue Babies: "I'm Wild About Horns On Automobiles That Go Ta-Ta-Ta-Ta"** (52508). It starts with a conversation between two friends, Jack and Ed, about how a date went. When the Blue Babies play, the crazy sound effects take us back to early days when automobiles with irresistible horns were used on dates. Jack Dalton is really Jack Kaufman, Irving's brother.

10) **B.A. Rolfe And His Palais D'Or Orchestra: "That's My Weakness Now"** (52343). This one will make you want to pick up the rugs and grab a partner! I prefer this version over the one by Jack Kaufman and The Seven Blue Babies (52364), which I don't play much.

DOUG OLDS LIVES IN QUEENSBURY, NEW YORK.

Doug Olds lists rare 52,000 series Edisons. Diamond Cut Productions makes CDs featuring Edison recordings from this late period, including the Rolfe performance above. See pages 74-76 for a review of Diamond Cut's newest CD.

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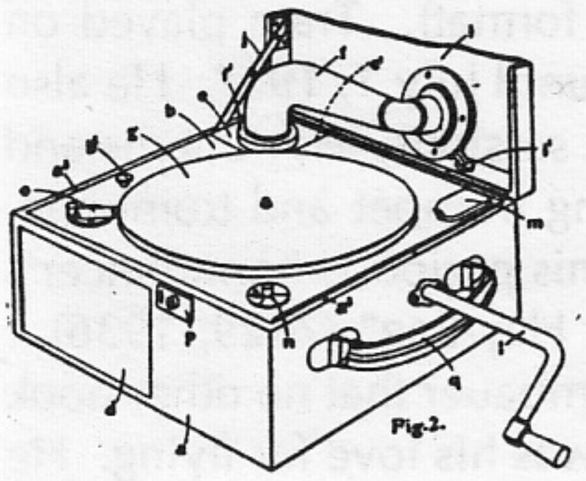

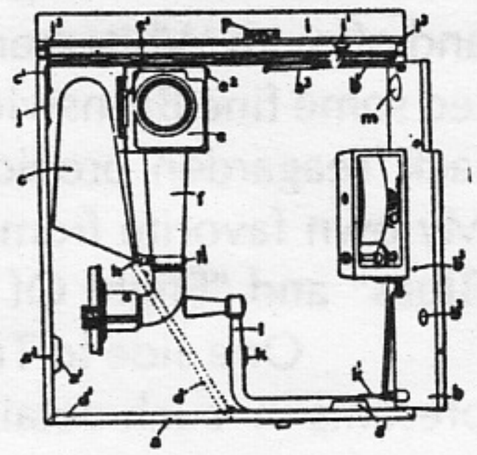

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NEW BOOK: *Tram: The Frank Trumbauer Story*

By Philip R. Evans and Larry F. Kiner (with William Trumbauer)

Scarecrow Press: ISBN #0-8108-2851-0

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

The Bix Beiderbecke biography Bix: Man & Legend, published in 1974, gives so many details about Jean Goldkette's band, Paul Whiteman's band, and important Okeh jazz recording sessions that the miracle of this Frank Trumbauer biography is that Bix biographer Philip R. Evans does not repeat much. Tram: The Frank Trumbauer Story, the definitive account of the saxophonist's life, establishes there was far more to Trumbauer than his partnership with Bix.

This 821-page biography can be considered several books in one due to some meaty appendixes--an exhaustive discography, a detailed chronology of Tram's life, a "Song Title Index." If documentation exists that Trumbauer played a song somewhere--let's say on radio on August 30, 1934, when Trumbauer played "Abe McIntosh"--the song is listed. Over a hundred pages list these song titles.

Included are notes that Trumbauer wrote in 1953 as the basis for an autobiography. He did not get far. The notes, if pieced together, would make only for a long article. They are presented in bold face in the biography proper. Fragments are given just as he wrote them ("Off to Chicago to organize my band"). The authors made good use of Trumbauer diaries, including one from 1928.

Trumbauer was already successful by the time he linked up with Bix in 1924. This book reminds record collectors to listen to Brunswick 78s of the orchestras of Gene Rodemich and Ray Miller. Trumbauer's contribution is not always distinct but these are generally solid dance band performances. Prior to 1925, he also appeared on Victor records with the Benson Orchestra, on a Gennett record as leader of the Sioux City Six (the discography cites October 9, 1924 as the date of this first session with Bix whereas Evans' Bix book gives the date October 11), on an Okeh disc with the Arkansas Travelers, and on Brunswick 2602 with the Mound City Blue Blowers.

One indication of early success is that Trumbauer, as a member of Ray Miller's Orchestra, played on the White House lawn before Calvin Coolidge. The date was October 17, 1924, and Al Jolson also entertained that day, so Trumbauer was in good company. Here is how he later characterized that day: "President Coolidge, after spending considerable time with us, stood up and said, 'And now will you please excuse me? My cabinet is waiting.' I never forgot those words!" (51).

Trumbauer's partnership with Bix is documented in Evans' earlier Bix book, but here Evans (with Kiner) covers the creative team of Bix and Tram with new details reported from fresh angles. Bix died on August 6, 1931, and the book then shows how active Trumbauer remained as a musician. With his own band in the early years of the Depression, he made fine, albeit rare, Columbia recordings. When will these be reissued on CD?

A special Columbia disc in my collection is 18002-D, recorded on April 5, 1932, with Trumbauer's Orchestra doing a medley of Isham Jones hits on one side and "'Sizzling' One-Step Medley" on the other. This Viva-Tonal disc is identified as a "longer playing record," clearly an experiment for Columbia. With America's economy so weak, Columbia picked a bad time to experiment with "longer playing" discs (my copy has tracking problems--Columbia had not ironed out the technical problems of the longer format). Tram played on and off with Whiteman until July 1, 1937. He also led some fine Brunswick sessions, with Charlie and Jack Teagarden providing trumpet and trombone. My own favorite from this period is "Announcer's Blues" and "Flight Of A Hay-Bag" (7629; 1936)

One side to Trumbauer that no other book presents in such detail was his love for flying. He

received his transport license in 1930 and owned--at different times--eight planes. In 1940 Trumbauer assumed a position in the Fifth Regional Office of the Civil Aeronautics Authority. Beginning with Chapter 15, more and more pages are about flight tests, and Trumbauer the saxophonist disappears. The research here is complete, and although these chapters may add little to our appreciation for Trumbauer the artist, many readers will enjoy knowing about this side of the man.

Before this book, Philip Evans' great contribution to jazz literature had been the classic 1974 biography Bix: Man & Legend, co-authored by Richard Sudhalter (William Dean-Myatt helped with its superb discography). It is now sadly out-of-print. I can think of no other one book that sheds as much light on jazz played in the 1920s by white musicians. Readers meet countless musicians as Bix Beiderbecke grows as a musician, joining one band, then playing in another--the Wolverines, Jean Goldkette's Orchestra, Paul Whiteman's, a dozen small recording ensembles like the Goofus Five and the Melody Sheiks. Bix: Man & Legend is among the handful of indispensable jazz books, and the new Trumbauer book should sit next to it on the shelf of most jazz lovers. Evans proves in both the Bix and Trumbauer biographies that he digs deep when he conducts research.

The Trumbauer book does not cover quite as much of the jazz terrain as the Bix book, but in one sense it is a better written book. Its prose is so straightforward that it will not seem dated anytime soon. The book has the strengths of the Bix book but is free of the touches that make the Bix biography flow like a novel--the very touches that I feel mar the Bix book. Consider this reconstruction in Bix: Man & Legend of the evening of December 12, 1925, when Bix is with girlfriend Ruth Shaffner:

"Bix?"

"Mmmm?"

"Love me?"

"Sure. What's the matter? Why do you ask?"

"Sure you won't be mad?" She looked up at him, eyes moist. He smiled. That same smile, soft brown eyes sparkling and dancing.

"Positive."

They stopped. "Bix, I'm late. For my--well, you know. I'm more than a week overdue." (154)

Later Bix leaves Ruth to rejoin the Goldkette unit:

"Hey, hey, Ruthie. None of that," kissing eyes moist with tears . . .

"Will you really come back? Really? Or are you just going to --"

"Sshhh . . ." He closed her lips with a kiss.

"But I--oh, Bix, I'm so scared."

"No, no . . . don't be scared. I'll be back sooner than you think . . ." (162)

When people in a biography exchange dialogue the way characters do in a Hemingway novel, credibility suffers. Tram is free of such passages.

Consider another example in the Bix biography of a novelistic touch and then consider its contrast in the new Trumbauer book. Chapter 15 of the Bix book reports how the musician named a now-famous piano work recorded on

September 9, 1927. Esten Spurrier, recalling years later what Bix told him, was the source for this, but the passage is so stylistically similar to passages in the Bix book for which Spurrier was not a source that one wonders how many liberties were taken with Spurrier's original words. It begins with a question posed by an Okeh recording technician:

"How about that title, Bix? Thought of something yet?"

"Gosh, I don't know," he answered, parking himself at the keyboard. In truth he hadn't given the matter a moment's thought. "Don't ask me that one today, man, I'm just in a fog."

With all the predictability of the commercially-conditioned mind, the official–whose name has been lost to recollection--recoiled in delight. "Hey! That's perfect! We'll call it 'In a Fog.'"

Bix, said Spurrier, scarcely hid his annoyance. "Aw, c'mon, man. That's corny. And besides, it sounds all wrong--all heavy, like a guy with a hangover. That's not the way I hear it."

"I like it," the Okeh man repeated. "Unless you can come up with something better, it stays in." (217)

Spurrier then reported that "mist" soon replaced "fog," and that is how "In a Mist" got its title. At least here Spurrier is cited as a source. In other passages in the Bix book, sources for words used in dialogue are unclear. A mannerism of the dialogue is that the musicians preface sentences with "Hey," "Gosh," and "Aw c'mon."

Tram also gives a version of how "In A Mist" was titled--interestingly, it contradicts the version in the Bix book. Trumbauer himself wrote an account of how "In A Mist" got its title, and he gives himself credit for the title. He recalled tapping Bix's shoulder when Bix had to end his piano performance during the recording session:

At two minutes and fifty seconds, I tapped him on the shoulder.

I then convinced Tommy Rockwell that he should release the composition.

"Okay," said Tom. "But what will we call it?"

Well, I thought to myself, Bix was certainly in a fog when he made it. And then it hit me. Fog. Mist. In A Mist. That's it--"In A Mist." (76)

Trumbauer's words are given in bold type in the book. We cannot know whether this account is true, but at least in Tram no liberties are taken with an original source--no embellishment, no third party making up dialogue. It is Trumbauer's account, straight and simple, and readers can decide for themselves if Trumbauer has credibility.

The two co-authors of Tram, Evans and Kiner, announce in the Foreword that Evans began research for this book in 1967, but Trumbauer's wife Mitzi "abruptly asked that the venture be discontinued" because sharing memories of her husband was too painful. The project was then resumed in 1989. The delay was a costly one--literally. The book sells for $79.50. Specialized books have become very expensive in recent years.

A Trumbauer biography published within a few years of the Bix biography might have cost around $12.95. That was the Arlington House price of the Bix book in hardcover. Had a definitive Trumbauer biography been published

Recorded on April 27, 1936, this features such musicians as Jack Teagarden, Artie Shaw, Artie Miller, and Roy Bargy.

earlier, Trumbauer might be better known today. Some scholars today reduce Trumbauer's contribution to jazz to two footnotes, one noting his stunning work on "Singin' The Blues," the other noting that Lester Young cited Trumbauer as an influence. Young even paid tribute to his predecessor by also recording "Way Down Yonder In New Orleans"--the differences in approach are interesting. I wish Evans had been able to determine whose influence the young Trumbauer fell under. Clyde Doerr? Rudy Wiedoeft? We do learn that Ray Reynolds inspired the youngster to pick up the saxophone.

Tram is among the most impressive jazz books published in the last several years, but the price of $79.50 is so high that perhaps only dedicated Trumbauer fans will make the investment. Consider today's college student in a jazz survey course getting excited upon first hearing "Singin' the Blues" (if this classic is not at least mentioned in jazz survey courses, something is wrong). I am sorry to think that students today cannot easily afford this biography of the saxophonist who led that important February 4, 1927 session. "Singin' the Blues" was only the tip of the iceberg. As the Evans and Kiner book documents, Trumbauer made many more contributions to jazz than that much-anthologized performance.

Tram: The Frank Trumbauer Story costs $79.50 and can be ordered from University Press of America, 4720 Boston Way, Lanham MD 20706. Phone 1-800-462-6420.

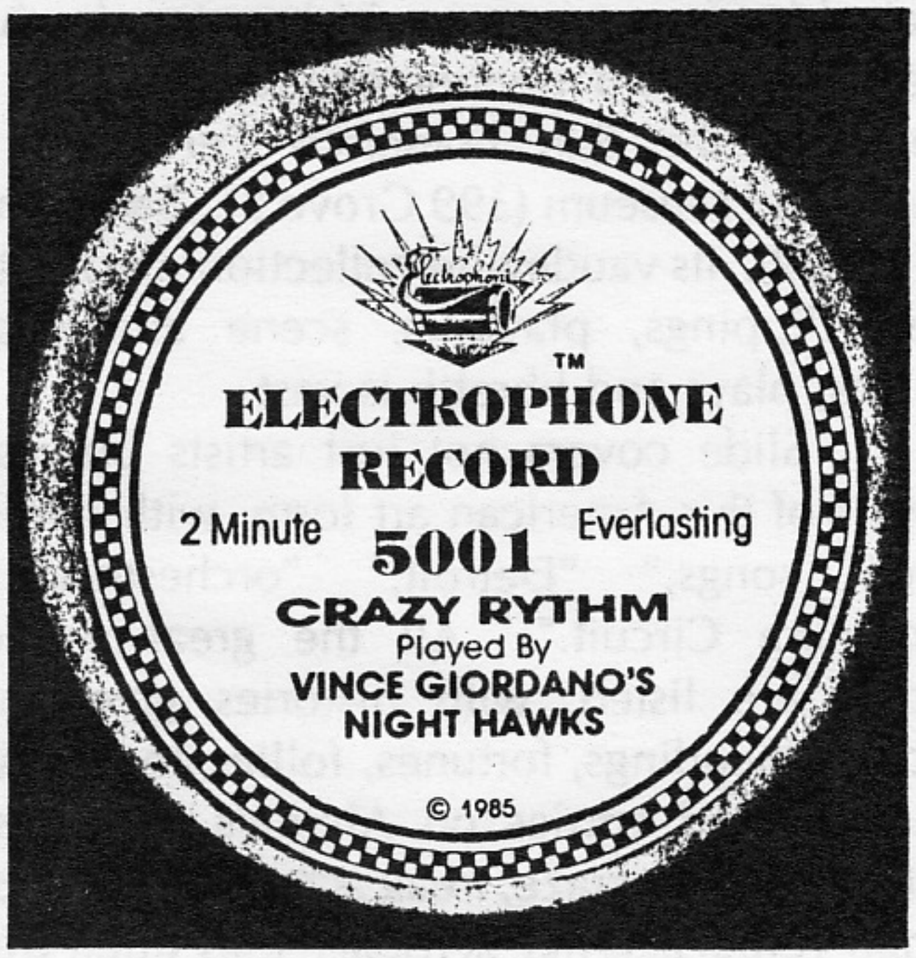
Vince Giordano and Buster Keaton

In the last V78J I reviewed Vince Giordano's CD titled Quality Shout (Stomp Off CD1260), saying that Giordano's jazz band successfully captures in a modern recording studio the sound of the past. You can now hear Giordano's music by turning on the TV--that is, if your cable company provides the American Movie Classic channel (the popular AMC). When he isn't performing jazz of the 1920s in a club or recording studio, Giordano provides soundtracks for silent films from the 1920s. When AMC goes to the trouble of providing a new soundtrack, a film is shown not once but several times, so keep your ears open if you watch AMC.

I made this discovery on Buster Keaton's birthday. Buster's 1924 Sherlock Jr. was shown on AMC to mark the occasion, and Giordano himself spoke before and after the film. Pointing out that silent films were not silent at all, he explained how he created a score for the Keaton film (the original score is lost). Giordano's handful of musicians play music from Keaton's period on instruments typically used in large silent screen houses--piano, two or three string instruments, two or three brass instruments, percussion. Giordano has provided soundtracks for Harold Lloyd films as well.

Giordano's band is not to be confused with the Club Foot Orchestra, a modern band which also supplied a musical score for Sherlock Jr. (available on the laser disc The Art of Buster Keaton Volume One). The Club Foot Orchestra is less interested in the sounds of the 1920s, so its score is less idiomatic--and less satisfying for purists (like me).

–Tim Gracyk



NEW BOOK: *The Encyclopedia of Vaudeville*

BY ANTHONY SLIDE

Greenwood Press: ISBN 0-313-28027-4

REVIEWED BY DAVID A. BANKS

In 1981 Anthony Slide published The Vaudevillians--A Dictionary of Vaudeville Performers, a volume of 172 pages with about 189 entries. Slide recently updated, revised, corrected, and expanded this work so that the newly titled The Encyclopedia of Vaudeville is more than double the size of the former work, with 605 pages and over 500 entries. Much of Slide's information is from contemporaneous newspaper articles, reviews, obituaries, interviews, show business trade publications like Variety and the New York Dramatic Mirror.

Slide has written over 50 books covering all facets of show-business. He personally knew famous vaudevillians and interviewed many more, including Milton Berle, George Burns, Mrs. Gus Kahn, Nick Lucas, Baby Rose (no longer a baby), Penny Singleton, Rudy Vallee.

Slide lists individuals and institutions that helped with research. The section called "Vaudeville Resources" describes over 30 institutions (address are included), which is invaluable for anyone wishing to do further research. I should mention one resource that Slide overlooks: the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum (399 Grove St., San Francisco CA 94102). Its vaudeville collection--books, tapes, press clippings, playbills, scene and costume designs, plays and libretti--is vast.

Slide covers not just artists but various aspects of this American art form, with entries on "coon songs," "Detroit," "orchestras," and "Orpheum Circuit." All the great vaudeville circuits are listed, with histories given of the circuits' foundings, fortunes, follies and farewells. You will find entries on Aleina's monkeys, the "Salome" dance craze, freak acts, "dumb" acts (that is, non-verbal acts like acrobats--they often went on first while audiences settled in their seats), male and female impersonators, hit songs like "In The Baggage Coach Ahead." There is an excellent essay on black Americans in vaudeville.

Famed entrepreneurs and managers are here--the Shubert brothers, B.F. Keith, E.F. Albee. Even Willie Hammerstein has an entry. This vaudeville manager (son of Oscar Hammerstein I, father of lyricist Oscar Hammer-stein II) is too often overlooked in books. Oscar Hammerstein I is here. He was important to vaudeville although he is usually thought of as an opera impresario. He is credited with establishing the Times Square theatrical district. In 1895, his Olympia Theater was the first built in Times Square.

British music hall, Folies Bergere, showboats, Chautauqua, the Borscht Belt, burlesque, even the Vitaphone--these have separate entries because they helped develop acts that were part of vaudeville. Vaudeville slang is covered. I heard some of it when growing up. If my grandmother felt a Sunday sermon was dragging, she would whisper, "Someone should give him the hook!" When an act was booed, a performer was pulled off stage with a hook--or so legend has it.

The most famous theaters have entries, such as the Hippodrome, the State, the Olympia, the Victoria, the Palace. Some routines were so famous that they receive entries, such as "Cohen on the Telephone." I recall that when my father would sit with friends, someone would recite the opening line and another would take it from there. They knew the routines well.

Rosa Ponselle began her career in vaudeville, so she has an entry. Sarah Bernhardt ended hers there, so she has an entry. I did not expect to find an entry for Mrs. Patrick Campbell, but she is here. Nor did I expect to find Carrie Nation, but this prohibitionist appeared in vaudeville. She also appeared in London music halls

and was greeted by gallery wags who shouted, "'ave a drop o' gin, old dear." Slide does not say if Carrie Nation appeared with her ax.

Slide covers big names and small. I can think of only two who are missing and should be here--Charlie Chaplin and Stan Laurel. They toured America in vaudeville as members of Fred Karno's Company in the early 'teens. Stan Laurel toured using his real name, Stan Jefferson.

Most entries are expansive accounts of performers' careers. Some song lyrics are printed. Dialogue for some comic routines is quoted.

Contemporary reviews are quoted, which is helpful when records or films failed to capture a performer's essence. For example, I think records of the Spanish-born diseuse Raquel Meller are dull, and Slide himself describes her as "singing a monotonous air in an unmelodious manner" (343). A friend said to me after we listened to a Meller recording, "That is what I call a low energy performance!" While admitting that in Meller's own day some "were not transported into ecstasy by Meller's performance" (344). Slide balances the unfavorable impression left on records and films by quoting what reviewers said of her at the time. He quotes critic George Jean Nathan, who said, "She creeps over the footlights like an odorless incense, hypnotically, alluringly." Another reviewer stated, "Her every song seems a fine flight away from mundane reality...one feels only the embodiment of gay, poignant, sullen, grieving, tragic emotions" (344). Slide points out that Meller was "the darling of the intelligentsia." He also notes that Charlie Chaplin adored her enough to consider making a film with her, which reminds me that Chaplin biographer Theodore Huff wrote that her singing "La Violetera" may have inspired Chaplin's City Lights. This song by composer José Padilla is heard throughout the score of Chaplin's film.

Other entries are not so balanced. Monologist Marshall P. Wilder is dismissed with a quote from a 1914 book as having told stories full of "dry whimsicality." The remainder of the short entry is devoted to Wilder's alleged plagiarisms, which shortchanges today's reader. Slide fails to define Wilder's source of appeal. Wilder, who was a hunchback and dwarf, was a teller of tales, a raconteur par excellence. With a gift for making audience members feel they had known him for years, Wilder enjoyed great popularity and toured extensively. One fan was King Edward, who commanded performances when Wilder was in London. Wilder's sunny disposition is revealed in the titles of his three books: People I've Smiled With, The Sunny Side of the Street, and Smiling Around The World. He made seven brown wax cylinders for the U.S. Phonograph Company between 1895 and 1896, later making two four-minute black wax cylinders for Edison.

Slide should mention Wilder's books and recordings. It would be even better to quote from a Wilder book so people today can understand the monologist's appeal to vaudeville audiences. Joseph Martel provided me with this quote from Wilder's People I've Smiled With: "To begin at the beginning, Old Dame Nature appeared to be out of sorts when she got hold of me. She put a couple of feet under me but she left a couple of feet off of my stature. She didn't make me tall enough to look down on anybody, or strong enough to thrash anybody, so I never was allowed the small-boy privilege of 'putting on airs.'" For information on Wilder's rare recordings, see Joseph Martel's article "Marshall P. Wilder, Monologist and Raconteur" in the October 1994 issue of New Amerbola Graphic.

A general bibliography is at the end of Slide's encyclopedia, and some entries have their own bibliographies. The Harry Lauder entry has a bibliography of 15 items, beginning with Darrell Baker and Larry F. Kiner's Sir Harry Lauder Discography. Slide lists Harry Lauder's own books--nine of them. This is in contrast to Slide failing to mention that Marshall P. Wilder wrote three books. Perhaps Slide can be more consistent if he revises and expands his encyclopedia. At the end of the Al Jolson and Fanny Brice entries, Slide lists Herbert G. Goldman's biographies of the artists, and Slide might note that both volumes have complete discographies--I have found the

two books invaluable for the discographies alone.

A few entries are too cursory. Marion Harris receives a mere eight lines but information on Harris is not that elusive. A question mark is given for the year of birth, yet Slide only had to check Brian Rust's Complete Entertainment Discography to find that 1896 is the year. Slide evidently did not consult Rust's important discography for any entries, and Slide's encyclopedia suffers because of this.

There is no evidence Slide consulted record catalogs even though biographical information can be found in some. The 1924 Columbia catalog states that Marion Harris' real name was Marion Ellen Harrison and that she was the granddaughter of General Harrison of Civil War fame. I know of only two Civil War generals with that surname, and I doubt if Harris' grandfather had been General Benjamin Harrison since the catalog would have mentioned if Harris had been related to a U.S. President! I suspect the reference is to Confederate Brigadier General George Paul Harrison (later a Congressman). Slide does not need to identify which General Harrison was related to Marion Harris, but he definitely could have added to his Marion Harris entry.

Contrary to Slide's assertion that Harris "came to fame in the mid 1920s" (230), she rose to prominence in 1916 when she appeared in Irving Berlin's Stop! Look! Listen! That same year Harris began recording, eventually making over 80 published sides for Victor, Columbia, Brunswick. Harris appeared in several Movietone shorts in addition to the feature film Devil May Care (1929). None of this is mentioned by Slide.

Does Slide ignore Marion Harris' recordings and films because he focuses only on the vaudeville careers of the people he covers? Not at all. There are many references to film work done by artists covered here, which is not surprising since Slide has served as Associate Archivist for the American Film Institute and is a resident historian of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

He discusses much more than vaudeville when covering some individual artists. In fact, he sometimes strays too far from the professional activities of his subjects. He comments that Bob Hope has received criticism for right wing politics. In the Duncan Sisters entry we read about Rosetta's "frequent bouts with alcoholism brought on, in part, by the effort of trying to hide her lesbianism" (144). Slide states Vivian Duncan had marital problems with husband Nils Asthor, "a closet homosexual." I only repeat such gossip here to make the point that it is out of place in this book.

In the case of stars whose private lives became public scandals, Slide is justified in giving details. For Evelyn Nesbit Thaw, the scandal became the career. She was a dancer in Florodora (her brief solo as a Spanish dancer was actually filmed in 1901!) and she married millionaire Harry K. Thaw, who soon afterwards shot and killed famed architect Stanford White due to jealousy. There was no television talk-show circuit in 1906, so Mrs. Thaw went into vaudeville. At one point she was offered $3,000 a week to sit in a box seat so audiences could see what a scandalous person looked like. Although she rejected this offer, financial hardship eventually forced her into vaudeville. She was billed as a dancer but morbid curiosity--not dancing--sold the tickets.

Vaudeville may be dead but some ghosts remain--photographs, sheet music, cylinder and disc recordings, film snippets, radio broadcast transcriptions. Plenty of readers, certainly V78J readers, will want to know if artists covered by Slide left recordings. Did George "Honey Boy" Evans? Did Lottie Gilson? Slide does not say. One would never know from Slide's book that Josephine Baker or Marie Cahill or Nora Bayes or Vesta Victoria made recordings. Of course, it was not Slide's purpose to provide discographical information. The problem is that he is inconsistent. He sometimes mentions recordings, sometimes does not. When he does, he often makes statements that are questionable.

Slide mentions that Eddie Cantor made records, but the information is wrong. He writes, "In 1920, Cantor signed a new contract with Brunswick Records for $220,000 over a five-year period, the largest contract of its kind, easily sur-

mounting those offered to such well-known, international stars as Enrico Caruso and John McCormack" (84). Slide cites no source (it turns out Green and Laurie say this in their 1951 Show Biz From Vaude to Video) and seems unaware that if Cantor did indeed sign such a Brunswick contract, nothing came of it. Slide should have checked Rust's Complete Entertainment Discography, which shows Cantor recording for Pathe and Emerson in 1920. Cantor moved to Columbia in 1922.

Slide (and Green and Laruie) may be confusing Cantor with Jolson's 1924 Brunswick deal. Herbert G. Goldman states in Jolson: The Legend Comes To Life that Jolson was offered a Brunswick contract for $7,500 a side. Incidentally, Ron Dethlefson in the 1990 Edison Disc Artists and Records refers to a clipping from a 1924 newspaper announcing Jolson "had signed a Brunswick contract to record 24 songs at a reported fee of $10,000 per song," and here is what Thomas Edison scribbled to employee Walter Miller after reading this clipping: "I wouldn't put him on if he

Vaudevillian Aileen Stanley has an entry in Slide's Encyclopedia of Vaudeville. Many recording artists worked in vaudeville and have entries. The Edison factory stamped a red star on this disc to indicate to dealers that it would be a slow seller.

paid me for the right. He is only good for them [Brunswick] around New York for advertising" (6A). Slide should at least mention that Jolson made records. If Jolson's stage, radio, and film careers are covered, why not Jolson's recording career?

Slide writes, "If May Irwin is remembered at all, it is not as a vaudevillian or a star of the legitimate stage but rather as a plump, somewhat unattractive actress, bestowing an amorous kiss in a flickering silent film from the cinema's infancy" (263). Slide is referring to May Irwin's role in the 1895 Edison Kintescope The Kiss, a 15 second film now on a laser disc titled Landmarks of Early Film. But I know many people who remember Irwin for more than this clip. Slide fails to mention that Irwin made recordings, and some collectors prize the Victor discs of "The Frog Song," "If You Ain't Got No Money You Needn't Come Around," "Don't Angrify," and "Moses Andrew Jackson, Goodbye." If we must single out the one thing for which Irwin is remembered, it should probably be for the tune "The Bully Song." Happily, she recorded it. Irwin's recordings are available on the Pearl CD set Music From The New York Stage, Volume One (GEMM CDS 9050-2).

Slide states Aileen Stanley "sold a reported 25 million records of 215 recordings" (477). Reported by whom? Slide seems aware only of Stanley's connection with Victor, never mentioning her records made for Pathe, Edison, Emerson, Gennett, Vocalion, Okeh, HMV. Even if we consider the various companies Stanley recorded for, 25 million sounds high and a source needs to be cited anytime such a figure is given.

Slide mentions that in 1912 Weber and Fields were paid $10,000 to record their "Dutch Sidewalk Conversation" but does not mention that this team recorded 14 published sides for Columbia and, in 1933, routines for Victor (again, Slide should have consulted Rust's Complete Entertainment Discography). The comic routine that Slide refers to appears on Columbia A1159--but it was issued as "The Drinking Scene." Incidentally, Laurel and Hardy do this routine in the 1929 two-reeler "Men O' War," and Abbott and Costello also filmed it. Speaking of movies, I

Slide reports that in 1928 film stuntman Lou Costello doubled for Dolores Del Rio! Proceeds from the disc above went to charity. The same performance was issued on Castle 1253. Slide does not mention these recordings.

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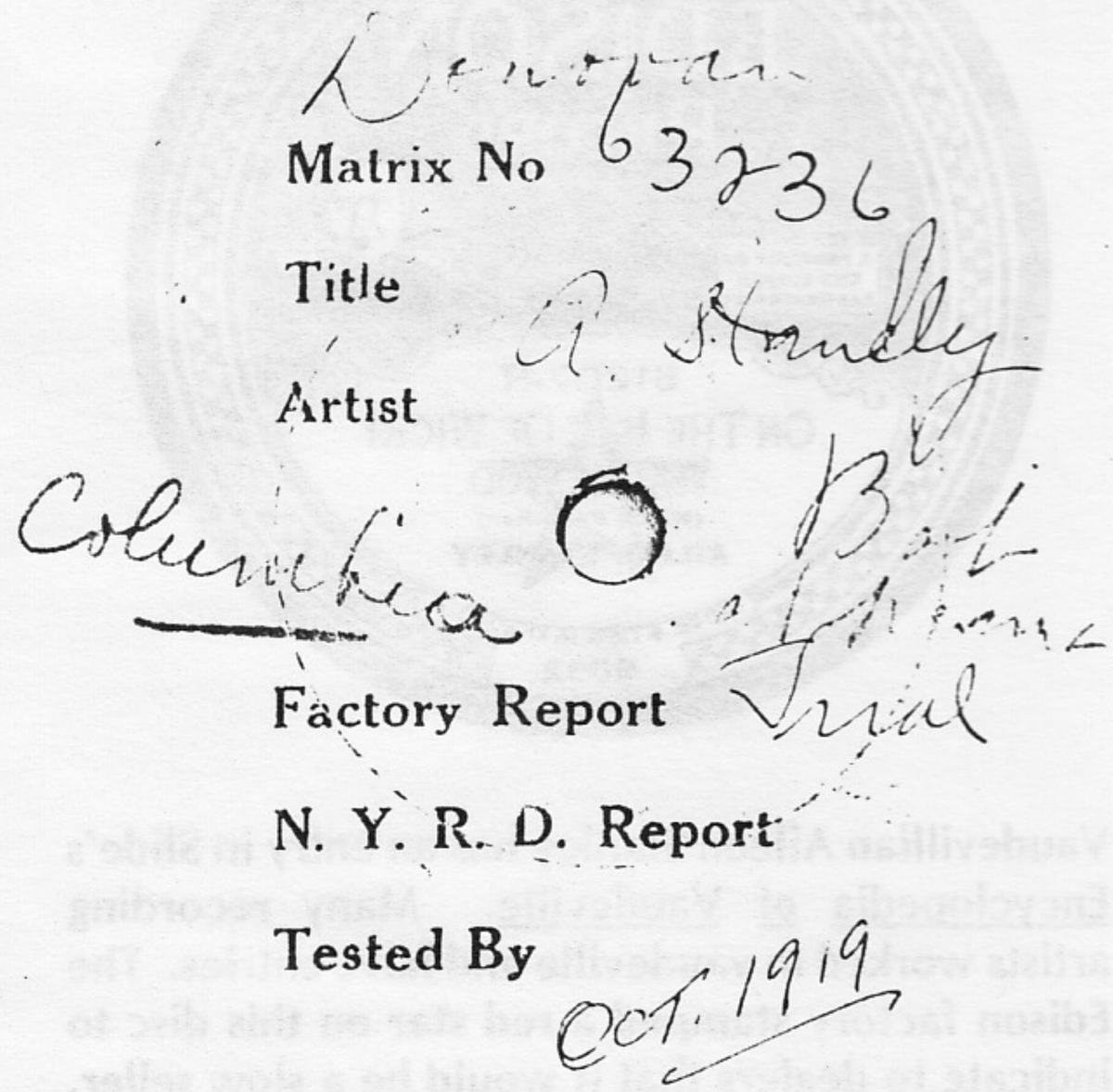
am reminded of another kind of omission. Slide mentions that Weber and Fields made a few silent films (and even that Lew Fields played a dramatic role in a sound film) but fails to mention their appearance in the 1941 film Lillian Russell. This film gives us the opportunity to see and hear the comedians perform a classic routine in the costumes and settings characteristic of their turn-of-the-century performances.

Many kinds of sound recordings fall within the scope of Slide's encyclopedia. If he revises, perhaps he can mention which performers can be heard on radio broadcast transcriptions, Vitaphone movie discs, film soundtracks, perhaps even private tapes. Operetta and vaudeville star Fritzi Scheff did not record commercially, but there exists a 1936 radio broadcast that would be worth mentioning in the long Scheff entry. She sings "Kiss Me Again," the song that made her a legend when she introduced it in Victor Herbert's 1905 Mlle. Modiste. The recording is included in an LP set titled "Great Ladies of Song" (BARD-4D2).

I must mention a different kind of omission. In his introduction, Slide pinpoints the first American use of the French theatrical term "vaudeville," reporting that in 1871 one H.L. Sargent used the billing "Sargent's Great Vaudeville Company." We are given no further information about Sargent, who does not have an entry. If there is nothing else known, perhaps Slide should say as much.

In spite of omissions and errors, Anthony Slide's The Encyclopedia of Vaudeville is a useful reference work, with the book's strengths outweighing weaknesses. The price may be steep, but various kinds of readers--record collectors, film buffs, theatrical historians--will find it worth the investment. What makes the work valuable are the many performers listed here and nowhere else. Record collectors will find the book worthwhile. Most collectors have records of performers they want to know more about. Until now, it has been hard to find information on performers who were vaudevillians primarily. They have been ignored by reference books dealing with other performing arts. Slide's book fills that gap.



NEW BOOK:

Tantalizing Tingles: A Discography of Early Ragtime, Jazz, and Novelty Syncopated Piano Recordings, 1889-1934

BY ROSS LAIRD

Greenwood Press: ISBN 0-313-29240-X

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

Piano was obviously useful as an accompanying instrument in the early years of recording, but much of the piano's rich sound is missing from acoustic recordings. Pipe organ and guitar were probably worse although sound engineers occasionally had good results from even these instruments when they went to enough trouble. Naming other instruments less suited than piano for acoustic recording is difficult. Nonetheless, masters of popular keyboard styles made recordings, taking time from concertizing and from making piano rolls. Just how many recordings is indicated in Ross Laird's Tantalizing Tingles.

So much of the piano's resonance is missing from acoustic recordings that I rarely get excited about solo piano works recorded before 1925. I admit that some Edison Diamond Discs are impressive, and I also believe that by the early 1920s Victor engineers recorded solo piano with greater success than in earlier years, such as with James P. Johnson's "Bleeding Hearted Blues" from 1923 (#19123) and Roy Bargy's 1922 "Pianoflage" (#18969). But how these must have sounded live in the studio! I must announce this bias before I review this discography of early solo piano recordings.

Laird's discography lists all known pre-1935 solo piano works of a popular nature, beginning with Max Franklin's work in mid-1889 for the North American Phonograph Company of New York. Laird does not explain why he uses a 1934 cut-off date, but I suspect it works better than, say, 1925 or 1942 would have worked. This would be a very slim book had Laird covered only acoustic recordings, and covering recordings up to the 1942 Petrillo ban would duplicate too much of what Brian Rust's discographies already make available.

Laird has done an impressive job of compiling titles, dates, label numbers, recording locations. I like its international scope. It lists early piano recordings made anywhere. You may be surprised by what was recorded in London, Berlin, and Sydney, Australia. Max Darewski recorded "I'm Just Wild About Harry" in London in 1922. Mischa Spoliansky recorded "Tea for Two" in Berlin in 1925. Willie Eckstein covered "Mississippi Mud" in Montreal in 1928. The evidence is strong that musicians everywhere were excited by new sounds coming from America. Some American songs and American keyboard styles crossed borders with astonishing speed.

As a bonus, Laird identifies in an Appendix notable pianists and the bands they recorded with. Some pianists jumped from one band to another, with the most jumping done by Arthur Schutt and Frank Signorelli.

I searched for my favorite piano recordings from the electric era and found them. All solo piano works I have on odd labels--Roy Spangler's on Rex, for instance--are here.

This book defines its mission in the opening line of text: "This discography sets out to document all early solo piano recordings which could be classified as coming within the ragtime, jazz or novelty syncopated genres" (vii). I would be more comfortable if Laird announced at the onset that the book documents all known works of this nature. Do we know everything that was issued?

Ragtime, jazz, "novelty syncopated"--Laird's list of piano works that fall in these categories is very welcome. Laird includes some pre-1900 classical works "when such titles form part of the repertoires of pre-1900 pioneer recording artists," and I am happy to see this book document George Schweinfest's performance of

"Lohengrin--Fantasie" and other classical works from November 2, 1889 on North American cylinders. It is not clear why a 1929 performance of the finale of Bach's Concerto No. 2 is included. Perhaps Jean Wiener performs this in a syncopated manner, but since it is coupled with Bach's "Ouverture de la 28é cantate," I suspect not. Nor is it clear why a 1927 piano rendition of selections from The Dubarry (given here as The Dubrarry) is included.

Many titles here fall in a light classical category but I do not complain since the inclusion makes for a more complete list of piano works.

There is a little inconsistency. The inclusion of "Calico Rag" (Columbia A2241; 1917), listed under Frank E. Banta, encouraged me to look for other piano works accompanied by the exuberant percussionist Howard Kopp. But "Uncle Tom--One Step," which features pianist Samuel Jospe, is not included. This happens to be Kopp at his best--cow bells, wood blocks, snare drums, whistles! If Laird left this out because Jospe's playing is far more pedestrian and less syncopated than Banta's, then one wonders why various ho-hum and definitely non-syncopated performances from the period are included.

I had fun looking for names of female pianists after reading in Laird's Introduction that the first female pianist to record a non-classical work was C. Elsie Blomfield, who made a Berliner in London on February 25, 1899. I now suspect American companies in the acoustic era kept doors shut for female pianists who played popular works despite this being a time when middle America viewed piano playing as almost a woman's art. Decades ago many boys took up violin in contrast to their sisters who practiced keyboard scales. Laird's discography indicates that very few female pianists--anywhere--recorded non-classical works before the 1920s. Americans who made recordings in the 1920s include Pauline Alpert, Edna Fischer, Vee Lawnhurst, Muriel Pollack ("The Piano Girl" on Edison), Constance Mering.

Did American record companies before the 1920s simply deny female pianists opportunities to record, or did accomplished female pianists consider it too unladylike to market themselves? I am not certain. Meanwhile, female composers of the period like May Aufderheide published outstanding ragtime works but their works went unrecorded until recently.

Laird does an excellent job of listing solo piano rags recorded before 1934. It detracts nothing from Laird's accomplishment for me to point out that record companies were not very interested in recording ragtime piano. We now live in a golden age of ragtime piano for those who want recordings. Want to hear all of Scott Joplin's works? The music fills five compact discs, and pianist Richard Zimmerman even performs highlights from Treemonisha. Want to hear solo piano works composed by Tom Turpin, Ford Dabney, Joe Jordan? Much has become available in the 1990s, and contemporary pianists like Frank French, Scott Kirby, Morten Gunnar Larsen, John Gill (of Australia), Trebor Tichenor and others are no less accomplished than yesteryear's Max Kortlander, Roy Bargy, or Zez Confrey.

It also should detract nothing from Laird's achievement for me to say that vintage recordings of piano ragtime are not absolutely critical to our understanding of the ragtime era. I was reminded of this recently when I attended a concert given by Richard Zimmerman, the ragtime pianist and editor of the bi-monthly Rag Times. Zimmerman's remarks between pieces indicated that, as a pianist and scholar, he relies heavily on sheet music to understand the ragtime era. Piano rolls are next in importance--Zimmerman indicated which pieces he learned by playing rolls and studying keys as they moved. He also learns a lot from other contemporary pianists playing ragtime pieces. He said many things to help the audience understand the ragtime era. At no point did he mention phonograph recordings. It did not surprise me.

In his Introduction, Laird notes that Charles H.H. Booth's 1901 performance of J. Bodewalt Lampe's "Creole Bells" (Victor 1079) is "one of the earliest known recordings of piano ragtime" (viii). Laird should probably also mention that Booth's "Creole Bells" is an anomaly. David Jasen's Recorded Ragtime 1897-1958 (a work that Laird

curiously fails to acknowledge as a predecessor) shows that "Creole Bells" was also recorded by banjoist Vess Ossman, Sousa's Band, the Columbia Orchestra, banjoist Olly Oakley, several others. Recording companies profited from the ragtime craze but they normally relied on banjo and orchestra arrangements.

Laird speaks of a "surge of ragtime piano recordings which began in 1912" (ix), but there was more of a trickle than surge in these years. Nor does 1912 seem very special. Mike Bernard was the one American in 1912 to record a rag that was issued--"That Peculiar Rag," Columbia A1313. Felix Arndt recorded eight rags in 1912, but Victor rejected Arndt's work! Arndt returned to the Victor studio in 1914, and his "Desecration Rag," issued as Victor 17608, was evidently judged good enough. In citing 1912 as a beginning, Laird has in mind a few rags recorded in England but the titles don't suggest genuine rags aside from Joseph Batten's "The Tramp Rag" (Popular P656).

Paradoxically, I most appreciate Laird's list of ragtime recordings for helping me realize how much was not recorded. The actual playing of great ragtime composers--Joplin, Joseph Lamb, James Scott, Artie Matthews--went unrecorded, and their works went unrecorded. Joseph Lamb's great "Nightingale Rag" was ignored until Hitch's Happy Harmonists performed it in the Gennett studio in 1925, adding "blues" to the title.

If we were to listen to all known pre-1935 ragtime recordings and nothing else, we would have a skewered sense of ragtime. Again, that is not a criticism of Laird's list of piano ragtime recordings, but I wish his Introduction had been frank about record companies not doing justice to this rich music. At least he should have provided more compelling analysis of how solo piano discs and cylinders help us understand the ragtime era.

In other ways his Introduction could be more precise and thoughtful. Laird asserts in his Introduction that "piano-rolls...did not usually capture the touch and feeling able to be conveyed by even the most primitive recording" (xii). It is not clear if Laird includes rolls for reproducing pianos when he speaks of piano-rolls and it is not clear what recordings are full of feeling despite being primitive. The Brahms cylinder from November of 1889? Fred Gaisburg on Berliner discs? Surface noise hides any feeling in such performances. Ampico and Duo-Art rolls can deliver every nuance that the best-sounding acoustic discs captured--and more. Laird's larger point is that he does not list piano-rolls since they are in another category, but he can make this reasonable point without maligning piano-rolls.

For a book strong in many ways, I am sorry that proofreading is weak. Typos appear even on the first page of text and thereafter misspellings add up quickly. The contraction "it's" should not be confused with "its" in a book designed to provide reference material for years to come. We are told that the presence of (--) after a song title "indicates the record label gives no ser [sic] credits." I assume "composer" is the word in question though my first guess was "serial." The first name of Meade Lux Lewis is given as "Mead"--is it found this way on a label or one more typo?

NEW CD: *Bo Grumpus - Volume Three*

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

The band Bo Grumpus consists of three musicians. On the band's new compact disc, some classic rags--three by Scott Joplin, one by Joseph Lamb--are mixed with imaginative performances of Tin Pan Alley songs generally found only on 78s, mostly pre-1920. This compact disc is like no other. It should appeal to those who admire the work of Vess L. Ossman, Fred Van Eps, Arthur Collins, and Billy Murray.

I mention Ossman and Eps since they evidently serve as models for guitarist Craig Ventresco, and Arthur Collins and Billy Murray popularized several of the songs performed here. I admire what Bo Grumpus does with rags and Tin Pan Alley songs. Respect for old recordings and old playing styles comes through in each cut. I look forward to more CDs from the band.

Featured are acoustic guitar, string bass, washboard--and Marty Eggers is pianist instead of bassist for two Joplin numbers. Ragtime enthusiasts with many versions of "Swipesy Cakewalk" and "Weeping Willow" will find Joplin music as played by Bo Grumpus refreshing since Ventresco accompanies on guitar, improvising in an effective way, and Pete Devine adds washboard. Solo piano recordings of Joplin are plentiful today, so I welcome this variation.

Ventresco's guitar leads on most cuts, with Eggers filling out the sound with inventive bass accompaniment and Pete Devine providing joyful percussive work. Devine's cowbells, horns, and cymbals are especially effective in "I Love Me" and "For Me and My Gal." The Six Brown Brothers' version of "For Me and My Gal" served as a model for the latter performance.

Several songs here were once associated with Arthur Collins, including "The Preacher and the Bear," which has the dubious distinction of being the coon song that sold better than all others. It is performed as an instrumental here, so there is no risk of anyone taking offense.

Craig Ventresco provides vocals for the George M. Cohan song "If I'm Going to Die I'm Going to Have Some Fun," which Collins recorded

1 **Sensation Rag** 3:28
Joeseph F. Lamb - 1908

2 **Someday Sweetheart** 5:19
Spikes Brothers - 1922

3 **Rag Pickings** 2:39
George L. Lansing - 1898

4 **Rag Medley No. 1** 4:30
Jessamine: Gumble - 1905
Won't You Fondle Me: Paley - 1905
My Tiger Lily: Sloane - 1900

5 **Swipesy Cakewalk** 3:13
Arthur Marshall & Scott Joplin - 1900

6 **I Love Me** 2:38
Will Mahoney - 1923

7 **Buffalo Rag** 2:27
Tom Turpin - 1904

8 **For Me and My Gal - Medley** 2:48
For Me and My Gal: Leslie, Goetz, Meyer - 1917
From Here to Shanghai: Irving Berlin - 1917

9 **Paragon Rag** 3:17
Scott Joplin - 1909

10 **American Valor March** 2:13
Samuel Siegel - 1908

11 **If I'm Going to Die I'm Going to Have Some Fun** 2:30
George M. Cohan - 1905

12 **The Preacher and the Bear** 2:46
Arzonia - 1905

13 **Oceana Roll** 2:40
Lewis & Denni - 1911

14 **Weeping Willow** 3:50
Scott Joplin - 1903

15 **Waltz Medley** 4:39
Sweet Rosie O'Grady: Maude Nugent - 1892
Norah Malone: McCree & Von Tilzer - 1910
You're Just the Type for a Bungalow: Young, Lewis, Donalsdon - 1921

16 **Downtown Blues** 2:28
Frank Stokes - 1928

for Victor (16103). Collins sings a line about "a very sickly coon," and it is understandable that Ventresco slurs the lyrics for that brief part of the song. This Cohan song may interest ragtime scholars since Cohan borrowed (stole?) from Tom Turpin's 1897 "Harlem Rag," a great rag that is important for being the first published rag composed by an African-American.

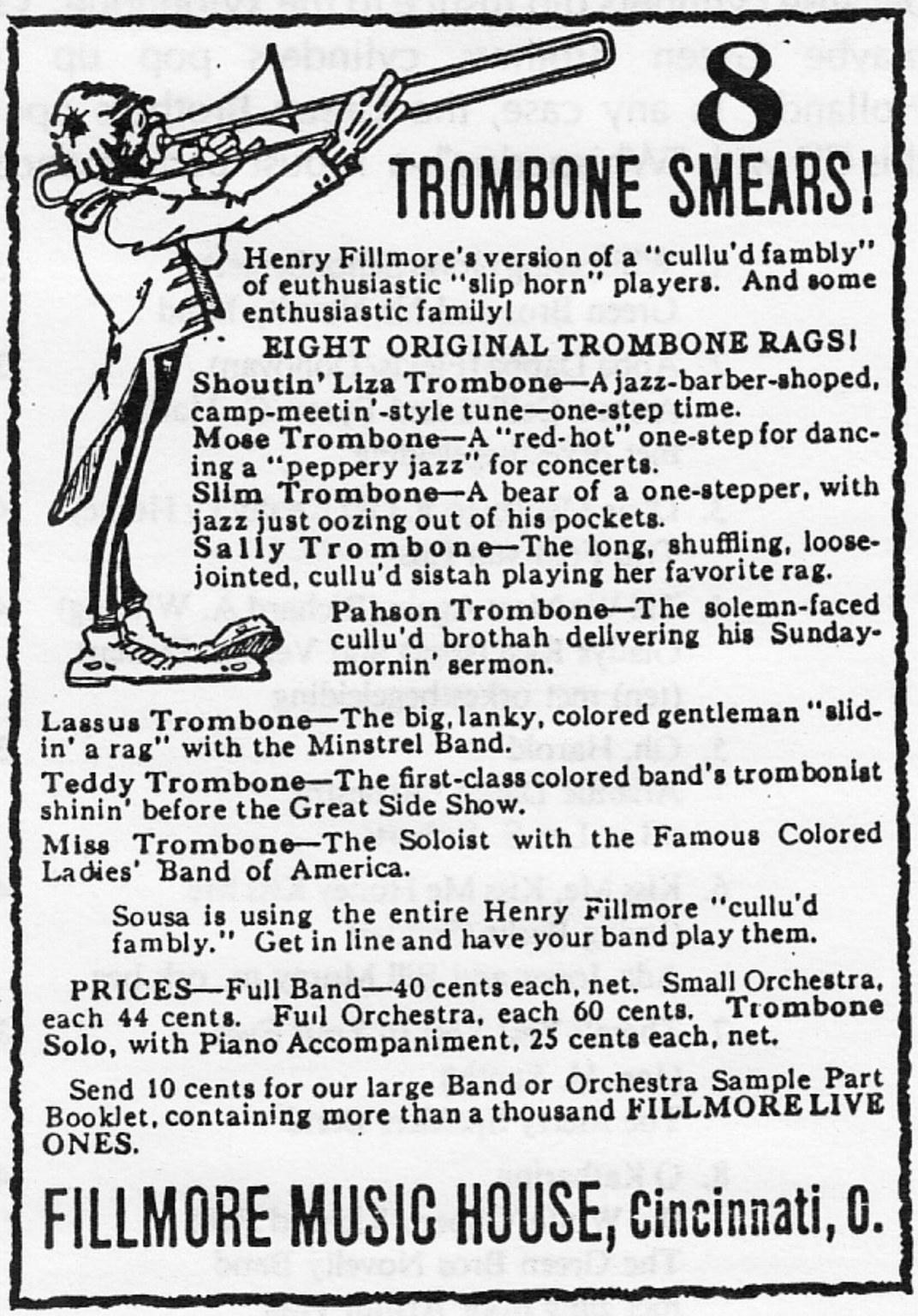
The CD notes do a good job of identifying who originally popularized the songs covered. The notes correctly credit Eddie Morton for making "Oceana Roll" a hit, but I should mention that Collins did a credible job with "Oceana Roll" on Columbia A1071 (listen for Collins parodying Eva Tanguay when he delivers the phrase "I don't care" in the chorus). Other songs here which Collins recorded include Berlin's "From Here to Shanghai," Gumble's "Jessamine," Paley's "Won't You Fondle Me," and Sloane's "My Tiger Lily."

The notes list "American Valor March" by mandolin soloist and composer Samuel Siegel and then give the date 1908, but is this a publishing date or the date of the recording that served as a model? It was recorded by Siegel for Victor as early as May 20, 1901 (Monarch #3380). He later recorded it in 1908 for Victor.

Ventresco provides vocals on two other tracks, and "Oceana Roll" unfortunately requires more than he can deliver. He does a better job on the speedy "I Love Me." In fact, I much prefer Ventresco's vocal performance to Billy Murray's coy 1923 version (Victor 19066). Notes for the CD report that others who covered "I Love Me" are Jack Haley, Irving Kaufman, and Mel Blanc, but I find Ventresco's straight delivery comes closest to a vocalist not mentioned in the notes--Harry Blake, who recorded it for Pathe Actuelle (020969). Other notable versions were recorded by Arthur Fields (Puritan 1518) and the Broadway Dance Orchestra (Diamond Disc 51222).

The well-written CD notes indicate that Bo Grumpus members are advanced collectors of 78 RPM recordings. However, I must correct the claim that only two Scott Joplin tunes were recorded during Joplin's lifetime since three were recorded before April 1, 1917. "Maple Leaf Rag" was recorded several times (though not as a solo piano piece until Willie Eckstein recorded it in 1923); "Wall Street Rag" was recorded by the Zonophone Orchestra around 1910; "Gladiolus Rag" was recorded by the Pathe Dance Orchestra.

David Jasen's Recorded Ragtime 1897-1958 gives no date for "Gladiolus Rag" and Steven Barr's The Almost Complete 78 RPM Record Dating Guide does not cover these Pathe numbers. It is worth establishing a rough date here. A 1918 Pathe catalog shows "Gladiolus Rag" was recorded twice--#29050 is the 12 inch version, #70103 is the 14 inch. Ron Dethlefson deduces that Pathe 29050 must have been recorded in late 1914 or early 1915 (Pathe 29020 is Collins and Harlan doing the late 1914 "Camp Meeting Band" and Pathe 29059 is Collins and Harlan doing the early 1915 "Auntie Skinner's Chicken Dinner"). Curiously, the 14 inch version of "Gladiolus Rag" remained in the Pathe catalog longer than the 12 inch.



NEW CD: *"Have You Heard It?": Edison Blue Amberol Recordings*

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

To my knowledge, this is the first compact disc devoted to Edison Blue Amberol cylinders. It comes from Holland. I am no longer surprised when American recordings are reissued by companies far away. The British company Opal reissued on CD some Will Oakland and Manuel Romain 78s, and the Austrian company Document reissued 78s of the Dinwiddie Quartet and other early Negro vocal groups.

I suspect a firm in Belgium or Luxembourg will someday issue "The Complete Uncle Josh" or "The Complete Henry Burr." How many CDs would be needed for all recordings of Henry Burr?

The fact that this CD features three Green Brothers performances suggests the CD's producer, Harry Belle, is a Green Brothers fan. Or perhaps the Green Brothers are heavily represented because cylinders did justice to the xylophone. Or maybe Green Brothers cylinders pop up in Holland. In any case, the Green Brothers open this CD with "Whispering"--a robust performance, despite the song's title. Was Victor's Whispering Jack Smith the only one to record "Whispering" in a whisper?

Arthur Fields wrote the lyrics to the CD's second selection, "The Aba Daba Honeymoon," which is curiously shortened in the CD notes to "Abba [sic] Dabba [sic]." Others have misspelled this. At the end of a 1926 letter to Thomas Edison, Byron G. Harlan signed off as "Collins and Harlan, the Abba [sic] Daba Kids."

This 1914 song earned Arthur Fields much money. Dick Carty told me he spent an evening with Fields on September 28, 1951, shortly after the song had been revived for the Debbie Reynolds film Two Weeks With Love, and Fields had just received a $10,000 royalty check. Fields was in high spirits that evening, singing to player piano accompaniment songs like "I'll See You In My Dreams." The evening's delightful performance was captured on a wire recorder and subsequently transferred to cassette.

1. Whispering (John Schonberger) 3'40"
   Green Bros and his Novelty Band
2. Abba Dabba (Fields/Donovan) 3'17"
   Arthur Collins and Byron G. Harlan
   met orkestbegeleiding
3. Dixie Medley (o.a. Old Kentucky Home) 4'10"
   Trio Fred van Eps
4. Till We Meet Again (Richard A. Whiting) 4'04"
   Gladys Rice (sopr) and Vernon Dalhart
   (ten) met orkestbegeleiding
5. Oh, Harold 3'27"
   Atlantic Dance Orchestra
   o.l.v. Lee S. Roberts
6. Kiss Me, Kiss Me Honey Kiss Me 4'09"
   (Irving Berlin/Snyder)
   Ada Jones and Bill Muray m. ork.beg.
7. There's Yes! Yes! In Your Eyes 3'46"
   (Jos. H. Santly)
   The Merry Spaklers Band
8. O Katharina 4'24"
   (L. Wolfe/Gilbert/Richard Fall)
   The Green Bros Novelty Band
   met zang door Arthur Hall
9. Benny, Be Yourself ! 4'09"
   (De Costa/Jerome/Ahlert)
   The Green Bros Novelty Band
10. Down In The Jungle Land (Morse) 3'32"
    Arthur Collins and Byron G. Harlan
    met orkestbegeleiding
11. Shooting (Fiorito/Storman) 3'28"
    Ernest L. Stevens Trio, sax.-banjo-piano
12. When I Get You Alone Tonight 3'40"
    (Fred Fisher)
    Billy Murray-koor en orkest
13. Radio Foxtrot And Song (Byron Gay) 4'31"
    The Atlantic Dance Orchestra
    met zang van Arthur Hall
14. Moonlight Kisses (Con Conrad) 3'19"
    From the "Greenwich Village Follies",
    Ernest L. Stevens Trio, sax.-banjo-piano
15. April Showers Medley (Silvers/Donaldson) 3'37"
    Intro: "Down South" from Al Jolson's
    "Bambo" Club de Ving Orchestra
16. Alexander's Ragtime Band (Irving Berlin) 3'57"
    Fred van Eps - banjo -
    met orkestbegeleiding (medley)

Hearing Collins and Harlan sing "The Aba Daba Honeymoon" again on this CD, I am reminded of cliches Fields employed as a lyricist. Consider this line penned by Fields about the chimp-monkey honeymoon: "All day long they were happy and gay." Many second-rate lyricists used the phrase "happy and gay," but the phrase is redundant, and better lyricists avoided it. Fields' lyrics to "Auntie Skinner's Chicken Dinner" were more clever.

Sound quality is very good on some selections, especially when banjo or xylophone is featured, but the wobble often associated with cylinders is distracting on a few cuts and some band numbers, like "Oh, Harold," are too distorted to be satisfying.

Notes by Jan W. Assman, printed in Dutch and English, express pride in this being a unique CD, and I am happy at least one CD pays tribute to Blue Amberol cylinders. Undoubtedly many people--not collectors necessarily--read about cylinders and wonder about them. This CD will satisfy those who are curious about cylinders.

But some statements are inaccurate. The 1911 "Alexander's Ragtime Band" is said to be Irving Berlin's "very first hit," but Berlin produced hits since 1909, with songs like "That Mesmerizing Mendelssohn Tune" and "My Wife's Gone To The Country." Assman claims that in 1902 "50 million cylinders were produced," but depositions taken around that time suggest Edison's National Phonograph Company made 2 million cylinders in 1902. Cylinders made by other companies in 1902 would not total 50 million.

Notes should be more accurate if only because some may buy this CD for its educational value. Consider this misstatement: "The reproduction of wax cylinders was a great problem until about 1900. In principle, a new recording had to be made for each wax cylinder." This roughly describes the industry's problem until 1889 or 1890, but it is not true of commercial cylinders in the 1890s. In the decade before January 1902 (when the gold-moulded process was first used), cylinders were produced by a mechanical pantographic system.

I suspect few other CDs devoted to Blue Amberols will appear. Most performances on Blue Amberols were also issued on Diamond Discs, and clean copies of Diamond Discs offer better sound. Of course, some Blue Amberols offer performances found nowhere else, and they are the ones especially worth reissuing. Perhaps 5 of the 16 selections here are from "live" Amberols, as opposed to "dubbed" Amberols. I could say precisely how many if cylinder numbers had been included in the notes. (Blue Amberol cylinders first released from November 1912 through December 1914 are "live" or direct recordings, and dubbed cylinders were released from January 1915 onwards. About a hundred "live" Blue Amberols issued after 1915 were re-releases from wax Amberol masters.)

Assman mentions that Fred Van Eps "is probably the only artist who made a recording on a wax cylinder (1897) and--80 years later--an LP recording." More accurately, Van Eps at age 78 made an LP in 1956. If any V78J reader has Van Eps' Five String Banjo, I would be interested in knowing how well Van Eps performed late in life.

Van Eps' longevity as a recording artist reminds me of a friend's question. Did any cylinder artist late in life make a CD recording? I think the answer is no, despite some living long enough to know the CD format. I can think of two recording artists from the 1920s who are living--William Robyn and Edna Fischer--but both were Victor artists and neither made cylinders (nor CDs).

NEW CD: Oriental Illusions *(Memphis Archives MA7018)*

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

The Tennessee company Memphis Archives provides a valuable service in reissuing 78s ignored by other CD companies. Below I duplicate the list of selections on a 1994 CD titled Tin Pan Alley Blues: 1916-1925 (MA7003). Try finding on other CDs artists like Irving Kaufman, Al Bernard, Marie Cahill, Vernon Dalhart, Ed Smalle.

Tranfers on Memphis Archives CDs are impressive. Price is mid-range, around $12, which is also impressive.

Consider artists on another 1994 CD. Titled Rags To Rhythms (MA7011), this reissues early ragtime artists like pianist Mike Bernard, Jim Europe's Society Orchestra, Vess L. Ossman, Chris Chapman (performing "Dill Pickles Rag").

On this new CD, Oriental Illusions, the selections are united by "Oriental" titles like "Singapore Sorrows" (Ben Pollack), "Oriental Man" (Chicago Footwarmers), "Sing Song Girl" (Sleepy Hall & His Collegians), "Shanghai Honeymoon" (Chicago Rhythm Kings).

I use quote marks for "Oriental" partly because this is really dance band music and jazz--that is, very American--and partly because the word "Oriental" today offends some people, who view the term as loaded with stereotypes. Jazz collectors won't take offense since they will recognize in the title an allusion to a great Slim Lamar performance (reissued here). The CD features 16 performances recorded from 1922 to 1938, from Friar's Society Orchestra performing the song "Oriental" to Hoagy Carmichael doing "Hong Kong Blues."

This is an innovative thematic approach to some superb jazz performances. Paradoxically, these performances with "Oriental" titles remind me that there was no significant Asian influence on jazz during the 78 RPM era. One could cite artists like Akira Tana and Toshiko Akiyoshi to argue that Asian-influenced jazz eventually flowered, but that was after the 78 RPM era.

Jazz renditions in the 1920s of "China Boy" and "Chinatown, My Chinatown" continued a tradition begun earlier by Tin Pan Alley. "Chinatown, My Chinatown" was actually published in 1910, with the Victor Military Band and American Quartet recording it long before jazz artists like Louis Armstrong or Roane's Pennsylvanians, whose 1932 performance is featured here. As "coon" songs went out of fashion, "Chinese"

1) **Home Again Blues** *The Original Dixieland Jazz Band (1921)*
2) **The Dallas Blues** *Marie Cahill (1917)*
3) **Alcoholic Blues** *Irving Kaufman (1919)*
4) **Boll Weevil Blues** *Vernon Dalhart & Ed Smalle (1924)*
5) **Memphis Blues** *Al Bernard (1921)*
6) **Homesickness Blues** *Nora Bayes (1916)*
7) **Frankie & Johnnie** *Al Bernard (1921)*
8) **If Your Good Man Quits You** *Viola McCoy & F. Henderson's Jazz Five (1924)*
9) **I've Got the "Yes! We Have No Bananas" Blues** *Belle Baker (1923)*
10) **Jubilee Blues** *Belle Baker (1923)*
11) **Railroad Blues** *Trixie Smith & Louis Armstrong (1925)*
12) **St. Louis Blues** *Bessie Smith & Louis Armstrong (1925)*
13) **Take It 'Cause It's All Yours** *Edith Wilson & Johnny Dunn's Jazz Hounds (1922)*
14) **Down Where They Play the Blues** *Mary Stafford & Her Jazz Band (1921)*
15) **Ain't Givin' Nothin' Away** *Southern Negro Quartet (1921)*
16) **I Don't Let No One Man Worry Me** *Ethel Ridley (1923)*
17) **Chinese Blues** *Irving Kaufman (1918)*
18) **If You Do-What I Do** *Eddie Cantor with the Georgians (1924)*

songs became more common, especially in the late 'teens with songs like Irving Berlin's "From Here to Shanghai," Harold Weeks' "Chong (He Come From Hong Kong)," and "Ching-a Ling's Jazz Bazaar."

The 1994 CD I mentioned earlier, Tin Pan Alley Blues, includes a song representative of the "Oriental" genre that came before--and influenced--the artists on this new CD. Irving Kaufman sings "Chinese Blues," written in 1915 by Fred Moore and Oscar Gardner. It opens with these lines: "Chinaman, Chinaman/Wash-'em laundry all day/Chinaman, Chinaman/ Smoke-'em pipe they say." Similar Tin Pan Alley songs were performed as instrumentals in the early 1920s, and eventually original compositions like Louis Armstrong's "Cornet Chop Suey" were given "Oriental" titles for novelty's sake.

Performances on this CD should be assessed as jazz performances, not for what we can learn about Asian culture. This reissue package is welcome especially for performances not previously reissued on CD. A few performances here had been previously available on CD, but Louis Armstrong's "Oriental Strut" and Fletcher Henderson's "Shanghai Shuffle" are almost obligatory here. How can any "Oriental" CD not include such classics?

I especially enjoy "China Boy" from Eddie Condon's first recording session in 1927 (also featured are Jimmy McPartland, Frank Teschemacher, Bud Freeman, Joe Sullivan, Jim Lanigan, Gene Krupa). Rarely is Condon's contribution to a performance so evident. He does not solo--did he ever?--but he keeps the momentum going. Two years later, when Condon appeared with Red Nichols' band in a superb Vitaphone short, "China Boy" is again covered and it sizzles.

The very brief CD notes supplied by Gregg Gordon are merely adequate. Speaking of jazz as a mix of ingredients, he states jazz musicians "had little trouble adding yet another ingredient [Asian] to the mix." Such a statement implies jazz was influenced by music that is genuinely Asian, but is it true? What in these performances was taken from Asian culture? Specifics are missing.

One misstatement must be corrected here. About Paul Whiteman, whose "Shanghai Dream Man" is on the CD, Gordon states, "Today his popularity is thought to have rested on the strengths of his singers, the Rhythm Boys, who included Bing Crosby." Thought by whom? Does Gordon himself believe such nonsense? Whiteman was incredibly popular for years when the Rhythm Boys were not a part of the Whiteman outfit. Why Gordon mentions the Rhythm Boys at all is puzzling since the trio had not been formed when "Shanghai Dream Man" was recorded on February 10, 1927. Harry Barris began recording with Crosby and Al Rinker two months later.

I also question this high assessment of Johnny and Baby Dodds: "With the exception of their former colleague, Louis Armstrong, the Dodds brothers were probably the most influential New Orleans musicians of their era." Where is evidence to support this? More influential than King Oliver or Jelly Roll Morton?

This CD is very satisfying, a fine addition to Memphis Archives' growing catalog.

The new Memphis Archives CD features the original "Shanghai Shuffle." It is fun comparing it with Keith Nichols' version on Stomp Off's new Henderson Stomp (CD 1275),

NEW CD: *"Hot Dance of the Roaring 20's": Edison Laterals 3*

(Diamond Cut Productions DCP-202D)

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

Lateral test pressings at the Edison National Historic Site are being issued on CDs by Diamond Cut Productions. The material was recorded in the late 1920s, a special period for the Edison company since it worked hard to meet demand for jazz-oriented dance tunes. Thomas Edison no longer determined what performances were issued by the company, so music issued on the Edison label in the late 1920s matched the upbeat music on Victor, Brunswick, Columbia. Many collectors seek Edison discs from this period only.

Pinpointing a date when Thomas Edison ceased making decisions on releases is difficult, but evidence suggests he stopped soon after Edison long-playing discs were issued. Certainly by the late 1920s Thomas Edison was silent on what bands and tunes were recorded. Jim Walsh reports in Ron Dethlefson's Edison Blue Amberol Recordings 1915-1929 that he had once been told Edison "may not have known of plans to make the lateral-cut record" (32). Whether true or not, it suggests how very far Edison had removed himself from the record industry by the late 1920s.

I am grateful to Diamond Cut for making rare material available. Three CDs have appeared so far, and I look forward to more in 1996.

This CD's title--"Hot Dance Of The Roaring 20's"--gives a fair indication of what is featured. More precisely, the 21 dance band selections here were recorded from October 1928 to July 1929.

Especially delightful is the previously unissued "Wipin' the Pan," performed in early 1929 by the obscure Bernie Stevens and His Orchestra. Nat Shilkret wrote the song with Willard Robison and Abel Baer, and Billy Murray is vocalist. A song composed by Shilkret and sung by Murray is not normally the "hottest" selection on a CD, but the beat here is infectious and lyrics actually refer to jug bands! The CD notes ask, "Was [this] just too hot for Edison Records?" I have an alternative theory for this not being issued. It may have been judged too similar to "Doin' The Raccoon," recorded only a month earlier by Murray with the Seven Blue Babies (a name for the California Ramblers), issued as Diamond Disc 52448 and Blue Amberol 5656.

The CD notes fail to identify Billy Murray as vocalist. Nor do the notes identify Jack Parker. Oddly, no singers are identified except Ermine Calloway and the obscure Paull Sisters.

On "Wipin' the Pan," Murray adjusts his voice for the microphone--this is Murray as crooner--and delivers lyrics in rapid-fire manner, with words distinct. Lyrics are not supplied in the CD notes, but I have listened enough to know these lines by heart:

They've got a rhythm
That the good lord has given
It's a rhythm you'll understand
When they do the dance
That's know as "wipin' the pan"
Gee, it a panic when a kitchen mechanic
Steps around to that old jug band
When they do that dance
That's know as "wipin' the pan"
With their hands turned down
They circle them around
With their elbows high
They'll knock your damper down
Up jumps a sister
With a new kind of twister, shouting,
"Woman don't need no man!"
When they do that dance
That's know as "wipin' the pan"

A small note from producers Rick Carlson and Craig Maier states that "much of the material which appears on this CD has not been previously released," but this needlessly exaggerates. The CD is welcome if only because original issues are incredibly rare. Notes really should identify what was issued and what was not. Reference books by

Brian Rust, Ray Wile, Ron Dethlefson, and Sydney Carter show that all performances here were issued with the exception of "Wipin' the Pan" and "I Want To Meander In The Meadow." For the latter, the CD issues a take rejected in 1929 (it is not the take on Diamond Disc 52622 nor Needle-Cut 14035). Most titles on this CD appeared on Diamond Discs. Three were also issued on cylinders: "I Can't Give You Anything But Love" (B.A. 5646), "Makin' Whoopee!" (B.A. 5659), and "I'll Get By" (B.A. 5683). Three were issued as needle-cuts.

Ermine Calloway, who was Edison's Helen Kane imitator, delivers the vocal refrain on "That's Him Now" and "Give Your Little Baby Lots of Lovin'." I detect in the former song, composed by Jack Yellen and Milton Ager, echoes of "When I Take My Sugar To Tea" and "Ain't She Sweet," and the latter song echoes "Singing In The Rain." Both are unmistakably from the late '20s--wonderful!

Less interesting is the vocalist on the Piccadilly Players' "Hittin' The Ceiling," which sounds like Phil Dewey. Vaughn de Leath was often a vocalist for the Piccadilly Players, and she would have done a more credible job here than the forgettable Dewey.

Sound quality on the CD is not excellent due to fuzziness or distortion on selections, suggesting the test pressings are flawed. Ron Dethelfson recalls seeing in 1983 the test pressings casually stored on open shelves in the Edison laboratory building, subject to dramatic humidity changes. I know from listening to clean Edison discs, both Diamond Disc and needle-cut, how sharp and clear this music can be.

I wish the CD notes had explained that the company turned to lateral technology by 1929 for technical, not simply marketing, reasons. Edison bulletins issued in 1929 for service technicians of radio-phonograph combinations establish that lateral-cut technology was needed if dance band performances of the late 1920s were to be played with electric pickups (see Issue 91 of New Amberola Graphic). The limits of hill-and-pale technology became evident with the advent of the electric pickup.

Rob Bamberger wrote the uneven CD notes, suggesting ignorance of the early industry in his opening phrase: "By 1909, the fledgling market for phonograph recordings..." Fledgling? The market was roaring by 1909, with Victor alone selling 7 million discs in 1907. He refers often to "flat discs," which is misleading. All discs are flat unless badly warped. Bamberger insists marketing was not Edison's strength but later contradicts that by stating, "Edison records and phonographs enjoyed strong sales during the 1910s." Incidentally, Edison's best sales year was 1921.

Among other false generalizations about early Diamond Discs, Bamberger writes that Edison "didn't anticipate the impact of Vernon and Irene Castle." I don't know what "anticipate" means in this context (to know beforehand? what company did?), but the Edison Company did capitalize on the Castle craze, issuing "Castle Valse Classique" (50240), "Castles Half and Half" (50191), and various dance numbers written specially for the Castles by composers Ford Dabney and Frank McKee.

Worse, Bamberger seems unaware of what has been published on Edison discs. He cites, for their "usefulness," only George Frow's book on Edison machines (a great book about its topic--that is, machines) and Neil Baldwin's Edison: Inventing The Century. Baldwin's book, with its errors about disc and cylinder technology, is a weak source.

Rust's Dance Band Discography shows that this title was recorded twice in mid-1929. I listened to the above and then to the new CD--the CD issues a take that was rejected in 1929. Notes don't identify what on the CD was issued in the '20s.

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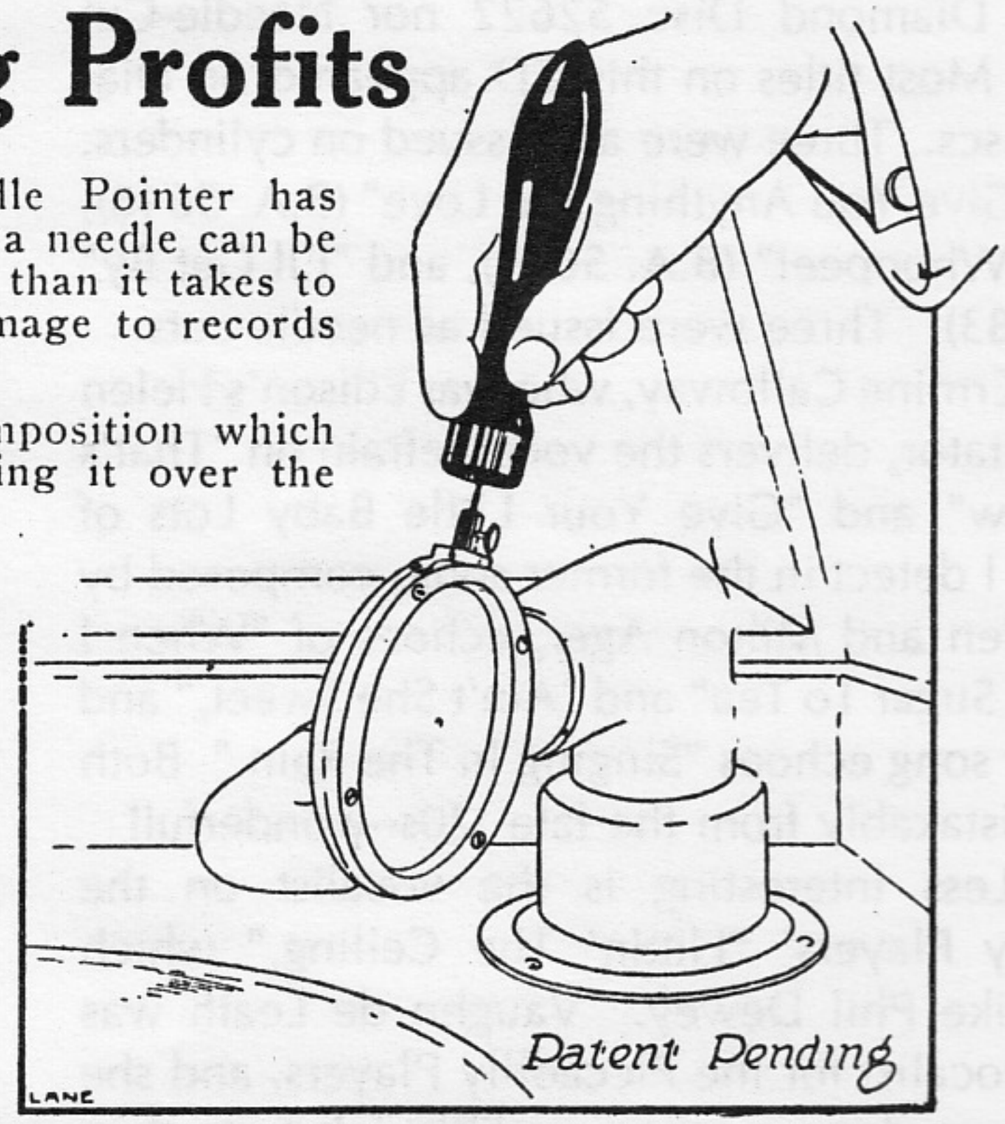

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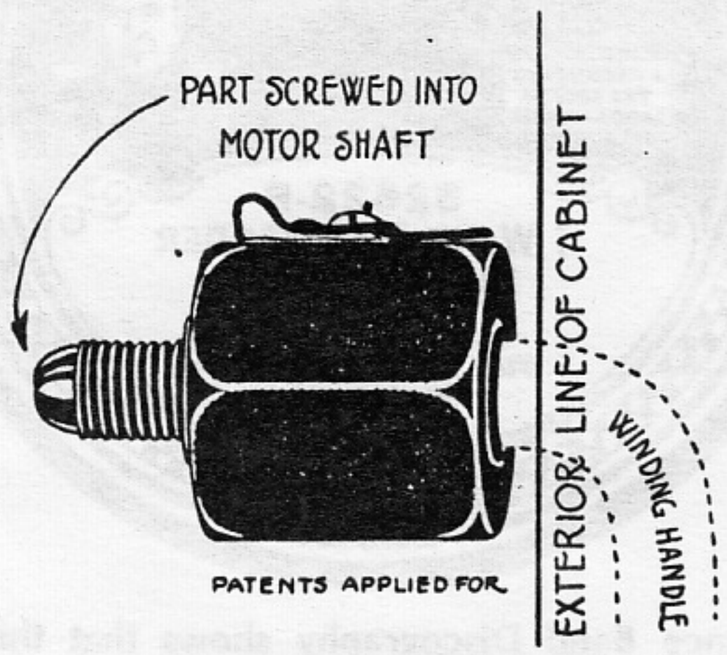

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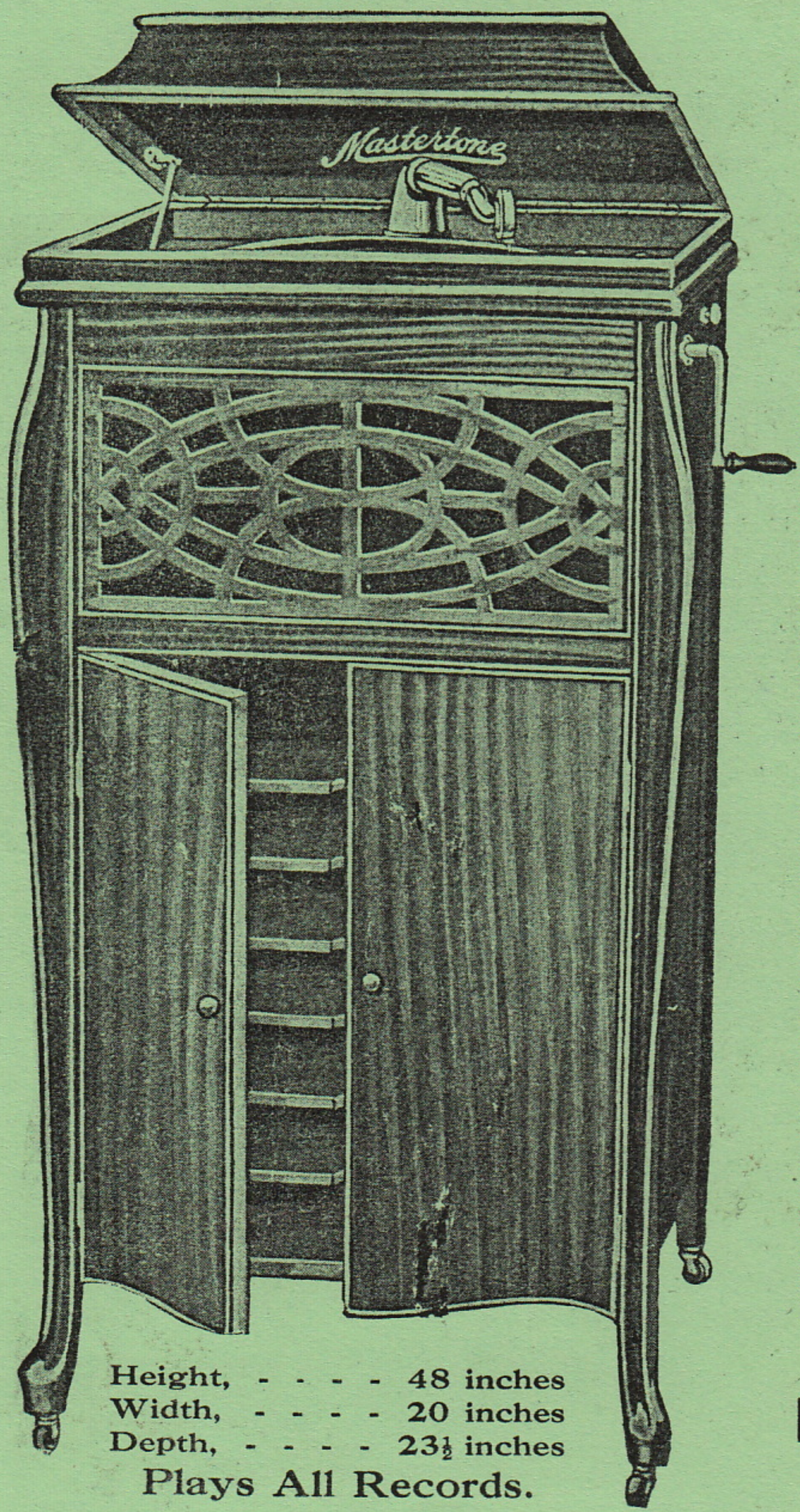

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